

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 40

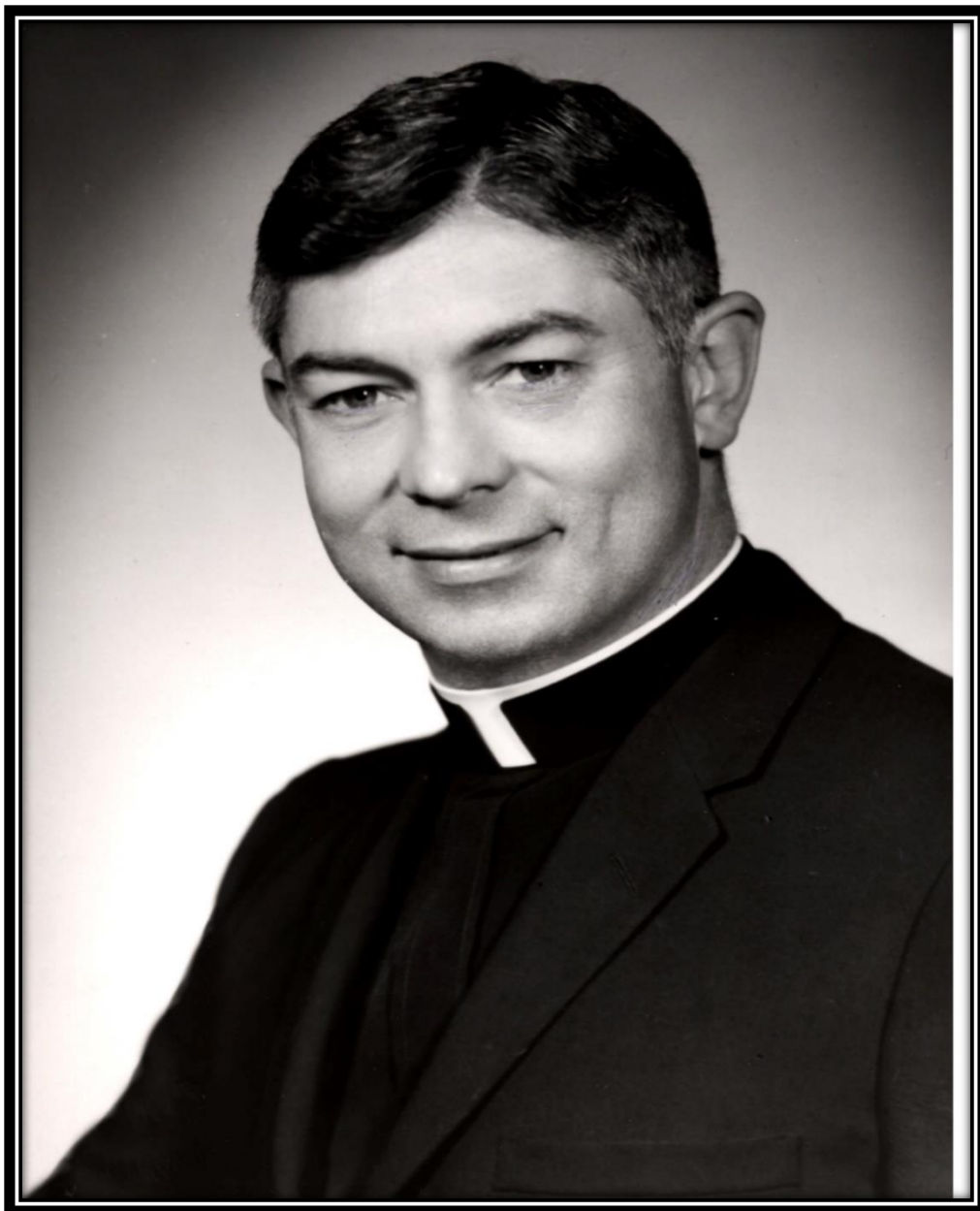
## *Father Keith Bernard Kenny*

Native Son of Omaha, Nebraska

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Sacramento

January 2, 1925 – December 20, 1983



**Keith Bernard Kenny, son of Thomas F Kenny and Verva V Heide**, was born on January 2, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. He had a brother Thomas and a sister Margaret. Keith was baptized later in January at Saint Adelbert Church in Omaha.

### **BEGINS HIS EDUCATION**

Keith began his education in 1930 at Sacred Heart Cathedral School in Omaha. The Kenny family then moved to San Antonio, Texas where he attended Saint Gerard parish school. His next school was Saint Paul Cathedral School in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. The family then moved to California where Keith continued his education at Saint Francis parish school in Sacramento, graduating from grammar school in 1938. He then began high school at Christian Brothers School on 21<sup>st</sup> and Broadway in Sacramento, graduating in June 1942.



Photo from Christian Brothers Archives

### **Christian Brother High School, 21<sup>st</sup> and Broadway, Sacramento**

Keith then entered the California Maritime Academy in Vallejo, California from June 1942 to December 1943. He became a deck officer in the US Merchant Marines and was a licensed Second Mate for all oceans and tonnages. He served in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, visiting Persia, Australia, India, Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, Chile, Colombia, Cuba and many Pacific Islands.

### **BEGINS CLASSES AT SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE**

In the fall of 1945, Keith began classes at Sacramento City College, majoring in arts and science. He graduated in the spring of 1947 with an AA degree. He then focused his studies on English Literature and became a member of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

In the fall of 1947, Keith transferred to the University of Santa Clara where he majored in English Literature and minored in philosophy. In the spring of 1948, he moved to Berkeley where he attend the University of California, continuing his major in English Literature and minored in Romance Languages.

### **ENTERS SAINT PATRICK COLLEGE, MENLO PARK**

In the fall of 1948, Keith entered Saint Patrick College in Menlo Park and continued his studies there until spring 1950 where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree with majors in English Literature and philosophy and a minor in the Romance Languages of Latin and French.

In the fall of 1950, he began his theological studies at Saint Patrick Seminary Theologate in Menlo Park for the next four years.

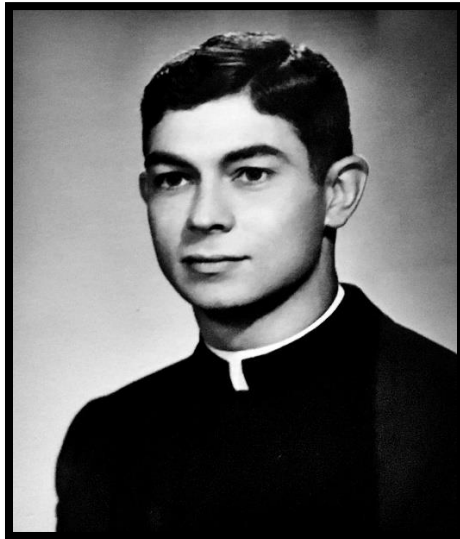


Photo from Saint Patrick Seminary Archives

**Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park**

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

Having successfully completed his theological studies and spiritual formation at Saint Patrick Seminary, Keith was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento by Bishop Robert J Armstrong in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento on May 1, 1954.



**Father Keith B Kenny**  
Ordination Photograph

### **FATHER KENNY BEGINS HIS LIFE OF MINISTRY**

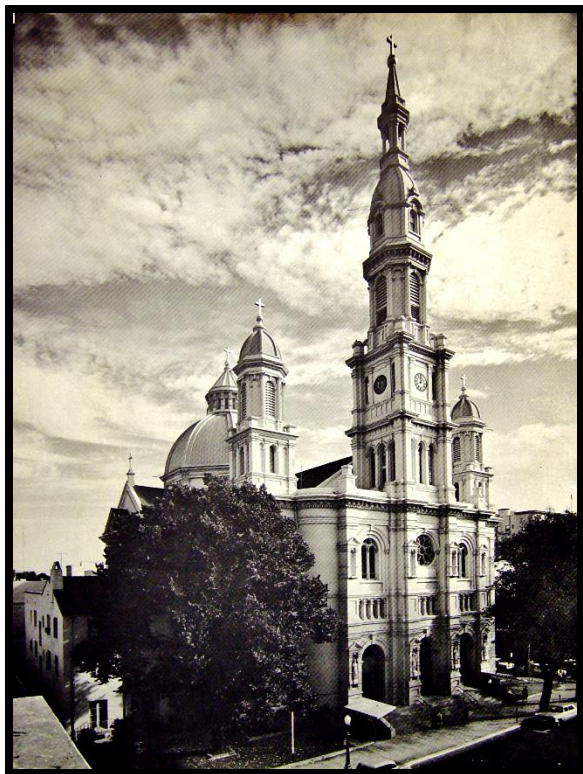
A week after his ordination, Father Keith was given a temporary assignment for two months at Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff from May 6 to July 19, 1954. He was then transferred to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Colusa where he served until April 13, 1955 as assistant pastor.



Photo by John E Boll

**Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Colusa**

## TRANSFERED TO THE CATHEDRAL IN SACRAMENTO



**Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament**

On April 14, 1955, Father Kenny began his assignment as assistant at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament with Father Raymond Renwald as his pastor. In addition, he was assigned to assist Father Anthony Maio, administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church located on 7<sup>th</sup> and T Streets in Sacramento. Father Keith served as assistant at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church from 1955 to 1958.

Guadalupe Church was located in the heart of the Mexican Ghetto. Father Kenny began working with street gangs and focused on *braceros* farmworkers from Mexico. With a team of young workers, he did a study of the conditions of *bracero* camps and later made public the findings of how *braceros* were being mistreated. The poor conditions at the camps where these men suffered aroused citizen interest.

## APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF THE CATHOLIC YOUTH ORGANIZATION

Father Kenny was next appointed director of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and assistant superintendent of Catholic Schools with his office in the lower level of the Cathedral and residence at the Cathedral Presbytery. He was responsible for programming, training volunteers and fiscal administration of youth ministry with a yearly budget of \$60,000. It was his responsibility to raise the money to meet his budget.

Father Keith founded and developed the first diocesan camping program at Camp Pendola. He was particularly effective in developing sensitivity training programs for young adults. During this period, he was one of the founders and first Board President of **LAMP, Latin American Mission Program**, which trained volunteers and operated missionary and community development programs in Mexico and Guatemala. Father Keith was able to secure Father Paul Diebels to be appointed the first Executive Director of **LAMP**.

Father Kenny served as Diocesan Youth Director for five years, from August 1, 1958 to September 17, 1963.

## ADMINISTRATOR OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH

Bishop Alden J Bell, newly installed bishop of Sacramento, appointed Father Kenny administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, succeeding Father Anthony Maio who was appointed to his first pastorate at Corpus Christi parish in Tahoe City.



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

### **Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento**

#### **OUR LADY OF GUDALUPE CHURCH IS RAISED TO THE RANK OF PARISH**

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church had been canonically attached to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament although it had its own administrator. Father Maio had asked the bishop to raise Guadalupe Church to the rank of a parish in the early 1960s but Bishop Bell did not take action on that request until October 21, 1969.

The following letter of Bishop Bell to Father Kenny established Guadalupe Church as a parish for Mexican and Mexican-American Catholics in the City of Sacramento.

***October 14, 1969***

***Dear Father Kenny:***

***Our Lady of Guadalupe Church has been devoted to the spiritual needs of the Mexican and Mexican-American people down through the years as a filial church of the Cathedral Parish. In view of the continuing and increasing needs of these good people, effective October 21, 1969, we now establish Our Lady of Guadalupe as a parish caring for the needs of the Mexican and Mexican-American people living within the boundaries of Sacramento City.***

***In view of the zealous service which you have rendered to your people, it gives us pleasure to appoint you as the first Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. Since your jurisdiction and that***

*of your Assistants will now be personal and since we wish you to retain marriage jurisdiction for people not of Mexican descent who may wish to be married in your church, we extend to you and to your Assistants, additionally, the status of Vicarii Cooperatores of the Cathedral Parish.*

*We dispense from the Ceremony of Installation. Would you kindly make the customary Profession of Faith required of new Pastors before Monsignor Higgins at the Chancery Office sometime, at your convenience, before October 21<sup>st</sup>.*

*Wishing you every success and blessing,*

*Yours sincerely in Christ,*

**+ Alden J Bell  
Bishop of Sacramento**



### **Peace rally at Capitol**

Herald photo

Father Keith Kenny, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento, represented the religious groups as a speaker at the peace rally held on the West steps of the Capitol last Saturday. The rally was sponsored by the Sacramento Peace Center and the peace committees of a number of churches in Sacramento including the Priests' Senate of the Diocese.

Father Kenny attacked the Christmas bombing escalation of North Vietnam. If there are no checks and balances to stop a president from executing such a unilateral act, he said, the essence of democracy has gone.

### **FATHER KENNY BEGINS HIS WORK AS PASTOR OF GUADALUPE PARISH**

This was the beginning of a very busy time in Father Kenny's life as he turned his attention to the work of justice for the Mexican people. He formed a parish council, the first in the Diocese of Sacramento. He trained leaders and formed a council of Spanish-speaking which became the Sacramento Concilio, Inc. He worked with community development programs in low income neighborhoods and became a representative of the Mexican-American community to the Sacramento Area Economic Opportunity Council and chairman of the Board for two and a half years.



**EMPEZABA LA LUCHA —** Durante los principios de la lucha por organizar a los trabajadores campesinos, César Chávez era un frecuente visitante de la parroquia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y el Padre Keith Kenny era su anfitrión.

### **César Chávez ends a march to the State Capitol at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**

Father Keith was a consultant to the Western Regional Office of Economic Opportunity and helped Cesar Chavez organize a boycott of grapes in support of striking grape workers in Delano, including picketing and a march to the State Capitol, ending as a pilgrimage of prayer for justice at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

### **CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND FARMWORKERS IN DELANO INTENSIFIES**

As the conflict over decent working conditions and just wages heated up between farmers and farmworkers, Father Kenny supported the efforts of farmworkers. He was a pilot and was co-owner of a 1966 Piper Comanche airplane, and he and Father Arnold Meagher flew out of the Sacramento Executive Airport for Delano on October 27, 1965. Using a megaphone on the plane, they encouraged the workers below to strike for better wages and working conditions.

While flying over the fields, Keith told Arnie to keep a close eye on the altimeter to make sure the plane did not fly below the 1000 foot level which would have broken FAA flight rules. They



landed at the Delano airport to have lunch and while eating their lunch, a sheriff's deputy came to the airport to check Keith's plane to see if he had flown below the 1000 foot level. The plane never flew below the minimum level and the sheriff officer left. Keith and Arnie then flew back to Sacramento and returned to their parishes.

### **BISHOP WILLINGER OF MONTEREY-FRESNO DIOCESE**

On October 28, 1965, Bishop Aloysius J Willinger of the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno contacted the Diocese of Sacramento expressing his displeasure that priests from Sacramento had involved themselves in the labor dispute in Delano. They had not asked for permission to come into his diocese and he found their involvement an obstacle to the local clergy whom he had appointed to help resolve the labor conflict. He asked Bishop Bell to restrain his priests from coming to the Monterey-Fresno diocese.

### **LETTERS OF COMPLAINT SENT FROM DELANO FARMERS TO BISHOP BELL**

The flight over the Delano vineyards also brought letters of complaint to Bishop Bell's office from Delano farm owners who protested Father Kenny's intrusion into their business. Bishop Bell was in Rome at this time attending the last session of the Second Vatican Council.

Delano farmers stated in their letters to Bishop Bell that Father Kenny was an agitator and not welcome to Delano. The questions they raised were:

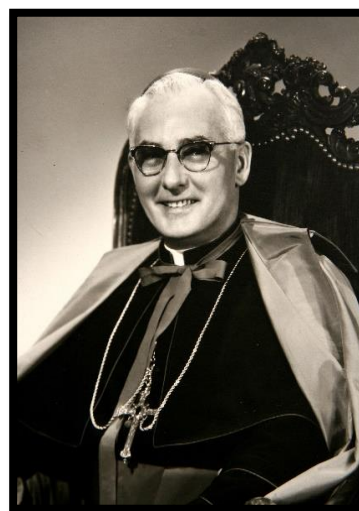
- 1 Did the priests in question have Bishop Bell's permission to leave their parishes?
- 2 Had they received permission from Bishop Willinger of the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno to create agitation in his diocese?

### **BISHOP BELL RESPONDS FROM ROME**

On November 2, 1965, Bishop Bell responded from Rome. He was not happy with his priests who had involved themselves in the Delano labor conflict. He ordered Fathers Kenny and Meagher to stop their involvement in the Delano dispute. After his return from Rome, he said he would meet with them in order to review the entire situation and take further action if necessary.

### **RESPONSE TO BISHOP BELL**

Monsignor Higgins contacted Fathers Keith Kenny, Eugene Lucas and Arnold Meagher and read Bishop Bell's letter to them. The following day, November 8, 1965, Fathers Kenny, Lucas and Meagher responded to Bishop Bell by letter stating that they intended to refrain from participating in the Delano controversy until they could speak to Bishop Bell in person after his return from Rome. The matter was resolved.



**Bishop Alden J Bell**



Photo by John E Boll

### Farmworkers pruning vines in the Napa Valley

#### CESAR CHAVEZ AND THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF AMERICA



César Chávez and the farmworkers' struggle for justice polarized the Catholic community in California's Central Valley during the 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike. Because most farmworkers and landowners were Catholic, the American Catholic Church was placed in the challenging position of choosing sides in an intra-faith conflict.

**César Chávez**

Twice Chávez petitioned the Catholic Church for help. Finally, in 1969 the American Catholic hierarchy responded by creating the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Farm Labor. This committee of five bishops and two priests traveled California's Central Valley and mediated a settlement in the five-year conflict. One of those hearings took place in Sacramento at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Father Gene Lucas, pastor of the Winters parish, spoke at that hearing.

Within months, a new and more difficult struggle began in California's lettuce fields. This time the Catholic Church drew on its long-standing tradition of social teaching and shifted its policy from neutrality to outright support for César Chávez and his union, the United Farmworkers

(UFW). The Bishops' Committee became so instrumental in the UFW's success that Chávez declared its intervention "the single most important thing that has helped us."

The American Catholic hierarchy went through a gradual transition from reluctant mediator to outright supporter of Chávez. Marco G Prouty has written a book that provides an intimate view of the Church's decision-making process and Chávez's steadfast struggle to win rights for farmworkers. This solidly researched book will be a valuable addition to the fields of labor history, social justice, ethics studies and religious history.



Photo by John E Boll

## *The Grapes of Wrath*

### **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWO SACRAMENTO PRIESTS**

In a recent interview with Arnie Meagher, he said that after he and Father Kenny returned to Sacramento from their flight to Delano, they went back to their respective parishes, Arnie to Holy Rosary Church in Woodland and Keith to Guadalupe Church in Sacramento.

Reporters descended on the rectory in Woodland to speak with Arnie but he refused to give an interview. The story of the two priests' flight over Delano in support of the farmworkers was written up in *Time Magazine* and Arnie says his parents in Ireland read the *Time* story and that is how they found out about his activities in California.

As an assistant at Holy Rosary Parish, Arnie says he experienced a lot of push-back from Woodland farmers the next Sunday. No one called him directly or threatened him but he felt their animosity toward him. Not long after, he was reassigned to assist in campus ministry at the Davis Newman Center. During his time in Davis, he earned a doctorate degree from UC Davis and eventually left ministry and married.

Father Keith and Bishop Bell came to a working agreement and he continued his ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

On August 1, 1973, Bishop Bell appointed Father Kenny Executive Director of Catholic Social Service in the Diocese of Sacramento. He served in this position until November 17, 1975. During this time, he lived in residence at Immaculate Conception Parish in Sacramento.

#### **DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS, SACRAMENTO**

Father Kenny was next appointed director of Social Welfare of the Catholic Conference of Bishops on November 17, 1975. He acted as legislative analyst and advocate for legislation relating to social services and issues. He did not stay in this position long and when asked why he resigned, he replied in typical Keith Kenny fashion, "I was on the eleventh floor and the action was on the street." He stepped down from the Conference on August 31, 1976.

#### **TEACHING POSITION AT SACRAMENTO STATE COLLEGE**

Since Father Kenny had a Master's Degree in Social Work from Sacramento State College, after his short time as Director of Social Welfare for the California Catholic Conference, he took a position at Sacramento State College School of Social Work in a program funded by the National Institute of Mental health. Within the concentration of Social Justice and Correction, Father Kenny was a field work instructor.

In an article about Father Kenny by L Foley in the California State University newspaper, he writes:

**"He doesn't look like an activist. Or a commercial pilot. And the faded blue jeans are about as far from a cassock as you can get. But Keith Kenny is pilot, activist, priest – as well as poet, teacher, musician, and social worker.**

**"On paper, the life of Keith Kenny reads like the lives of four men. As a new faculty member of the CSUS School of Social Work, he is director of an off-campus experimental program, and is involved in a contemporary corrections program in which ex-offenders with the ability to function at the college level are accepted into the university structure.**

**"He describes himself as an incurable romantic who always wanted to go to sea and grabbed the first opportunity. The skies prompted some dreams as well. As a boy, he watched the barnstormers with the hope of *someday*. The day came. Starting out in a cloud duster in the fifties, he progressed to larger craft, and today is licensed to fly single and multi-engine planes**

off of land or sea, and is a licensed flight and instrument instructor. He has flown from Yucatán to Alaska and from the east coast to the Pacific.



Photo from Cal State Website

### California State University, Sacramento

“An advocate of non-violent change, he seeks to involve people in the planning processes that will affect their lives, and emphasizes building on the strengths of local groups. And how does the church feel about his affiliation with the *Alianza* and his involvement with other causes? He smiles – just a little. He quietly answers he does not ask for permission anymore. Understatement is one of his trademarks.

“Keith Kenny has a dream that has not yet come true. He would like to have a parish on the edge of a town with an airstrip alongside and a restaurant-bar where he could play the cocktail music. Viewing this man’s track record, we invite you to check with us in a few years. We’ll give you directions on how to get there.”

#### DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND PLANNING

In 1981, Bishop Francis Quinn, bishop of Sacramento, appointed Father Kenny to be director of the new Office of Research and Planning for the Diocese of Sacramento. During the next two

years, Father Kenny worked long and hard to chart the ever changing realities of the Diocese of Sacramento with a view of making concrete plans to meet the needs of the growing diocese.

### **SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED DEATH OF FATHER KENNY**

Father Kenny had a positive working relationship with Bishop Quinn in his work of diocesan planning. There was a spirit of mutual trust and respect between them. Father Keith was making good progress in the planning process but all that would come to a sudden and abrupt end on Tuesday, December 20, 1983. When Father Keith went to bed at Our Lady of Guadalupe rectory on Monday night, sometime during that night he suffered a fatal heart attack in his sleep and was found dead in his bed the next morning. He was 58 years of age.

His sudden death was a tragic loss for thousands of people who came to love this tenacious priest, prophet and shepherd of the twentieth century who spent his life's energy working for justice for the poor and marginalized of California and the nation.

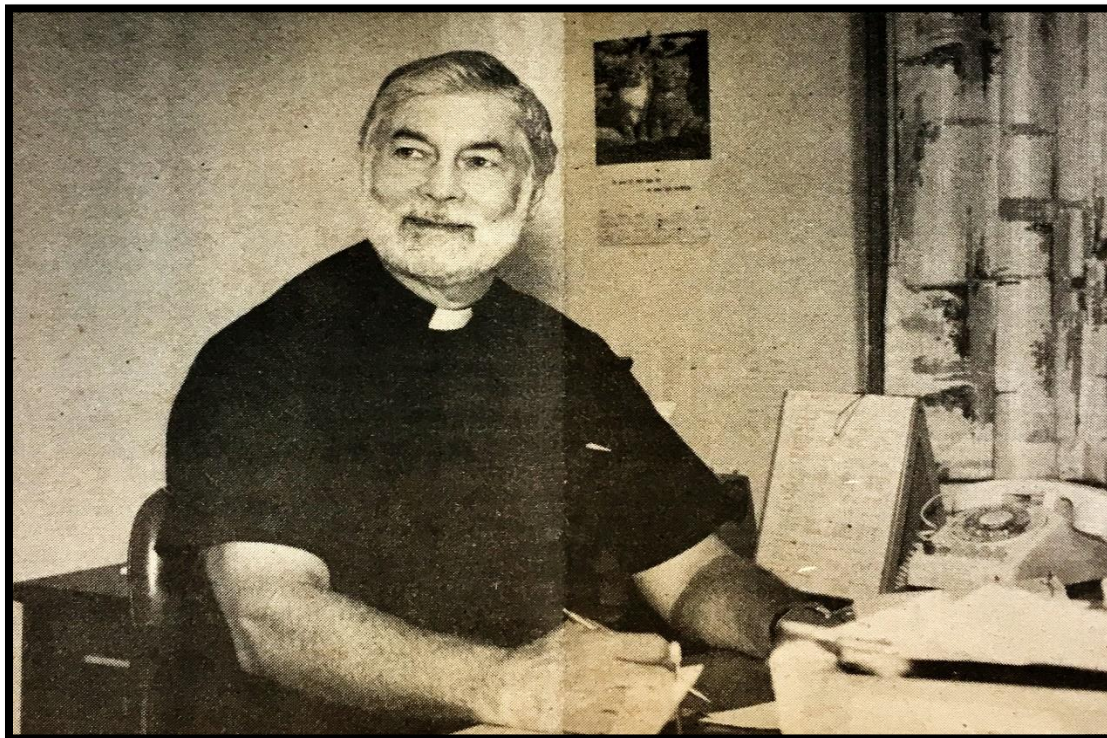


Photo from the Catholic Herald

### **Father Keith Kenny**

### **FATHER KENNY'S FUNERAL**

Father Kenny's funeral was one of the largest in the history of Sacramento with an estimated 1100 people jammed into Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento day and night for four days to mourn the loss of their beloved friend and *padrecito*.

The Funeral Mass, held in Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, was concelebrated on December 23 by Bishop Francis Quinn, presider, Auxiliary Bishop Alphonse Gallegos, Auxiliary Bishop William

Levada of Los Angeles, Bishop John Cummins of Oakland and 180 priests. The church was packed with the faithful Hispanic community from around the diocese and the State of California.

Father Jorge Moreno, a close personal friend of Father Kenny who succeeded him as pastor of Guadalupe Parish 10 years before, was the homilist. Father Moreno preached in Spanish and praised Father Kenny's intellectual brilliance and dedication to the poor. He remarked that "a certain monsignor in our diocese once said that because Father Kenny was so brilliant and dedicated we would finally get one of our own local priests as bishop. But he spent his life with the poor, with his wetbacks and his catechism children."

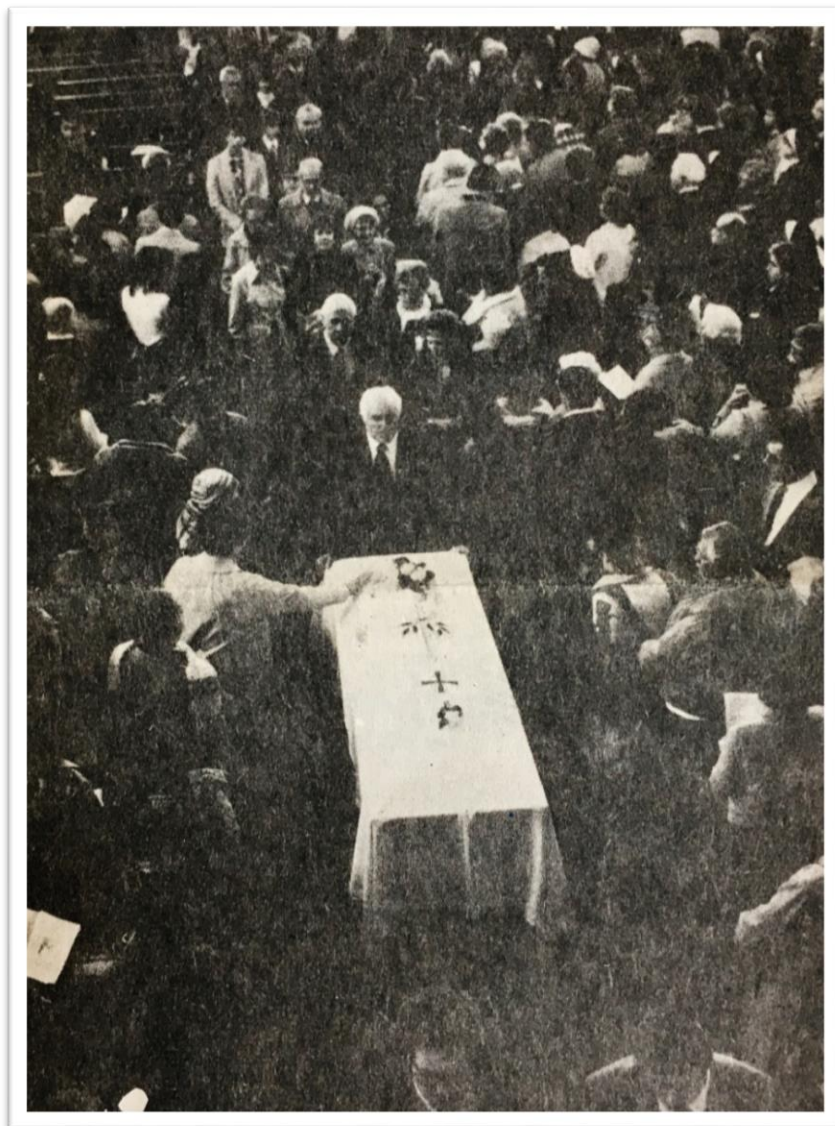


Photo from the *Sacramento Bee*

### **Farewell to Father Kenny**

#### **INTENDED TO PROTEST AND BE ARRESTED**

Father Kenny had planned to be arrested in a protest against Reagan Administration policy in Central America after Christmas. When the demonstration took place, Father

Kenny's sister Margaret was arrested in his place along with six other people. They blocked the entrance to the federal building on Capitol Mall. Those arrested were Margaret Kenny, Dan Delaney, member of the diocesan Social Concerns Commission and director of Loaves and Fishes Dining Room; Georgia Lyga, program coordinator of the diocesan Social Concerns Commission; Reverend David Moss, pastor of Rio Linda United Methodist Church; Matt Myers, teacher at Bishop Manogue High School, Sacramento; Pat Dahlberg, member of the parish council of Saint Joseph Church, Clarksburg and Bolivar Moran, member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento.

#### **FATHER KENNY'S REFLECT ON HIS LIFE**

In his last will and testament, written in Spanish and English, Father Kenny reflected on his priestly life in Sacramento. Father Moreno read Father Kenny's personal reflection at the Funeral Mass:

**"I thank God for the life he has given me, for my family and my friends. God has been very good to me and I am sincerely grateful. My life has had so many beautiful moments and has touched so many beautiful people that I can only rejoice in its richness. There have been sadness and heartaches too, but I suppose that the loneliness and the heartache are all a part of our human condition and are longing for a love that is not to be found in this life.**

**"I believe in God. I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. I love God. I love Jesus. My only regret is that I have not loved enough. May the Lord have mercy on me."**

#### **BURIAL OF FATHER KENNY**

At the conclusion of the Funeral Mass, Bishop Quinn said, "Father Kenny was dedicated to Spanish-speaking people, the poor, disadvantaged and oppressed. Because he was a prayerful and compassionate man, he will be no stranger to God, nor God a stranger to him."

Father Keith was survived by his brother Thomas Kenny and sister Margaret Kenny Orr of Sacramento. Father Keith's brother Tom was well-known in Sacramento since he was Executive Secretary of the Sacramento Area Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO. Five months after Keith's death, Tom was found dead in bed by his wife on May 23, 1984, having died of a heart attack in his sleep just as Keith had died on December 20, 1983.





Photo by John E Boll

### Headstone of Father Keith Bernardo Kenny

*Your life was about Love and Struggle for the Poor and Oppressed  
An Enlightened Shout for Justice!*

#### EDITORIAL/COMMENTARY BY THE CATHOLIC HERALD

The Herald does not normally single out individual priests for editorial comment after their death. Every priest has a unique contribution to make to our diocese and making distinctions is usually inappropriate.

Father Keith Kenny is an exception. The impact this man's life has had on the civic and church communities of our diocese make it apparent he was a priest of unusual talents. His four-day funeral was one of the largest in the history of Sacramento.

Three outstanding realities stand out in the almost 30 years of priesthood of Father Kenny:

**Intellectual brilliance.** While he was better known for his fluency in Spanish and his column in that language in *El Heraldo Católico*, his expertise extended far beyond that field. He was an expert in future planning and computer science, spending the last years of his life founding a department in that field for the diocese. He was an expert pilot, holding an instructors license in that area. And he loved poetry and music. Margaret Harrison of Sacramento's Sacred Heart

parish, who taught him at Sacramento City College, recalls that one essay assignment he did for her on heroic couplet was itself written in heroic couplet.

**A deep love for the poor.** Father Kenny was concerned enough about racism in the church to get angry about it, and he often expressed that anger in writing and public demonstrations. His name appeared in *Time* magazine for demonstrations on behalf of the United Farmworkers Union in Delano when that organization was beginning. There were those who argued that his anger was not justified, but recent pastoral letters by the US bishops on racism in the church have vindicated his many hours on the picket lines.

**Misunderstanding by church authorities.** One of his heaviest crosses was the gap he felt between his own convictions about the poor in the church and those of his superiors. To allot blame for this would be futile. As Bishop Francis Quinn – whom he deeply respected – commented at his funeral, he took strong stands that frightened many people in authority. That is the life of the prophet.

Father Kenny's untimely death cut off his life when it seemed there was still much to be done. The Lord decided his work was complete. That work will not be easily forgotten. When the histories of Sacramento city and the Sacramento diocese are written he will have a large chapter in both.

#### **FATHER KENNY'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CITY AND DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**

Father Kenny was a very experienced and qualified person in many areas. His life reads like the lives of four men, not one. Listed below are some of his qualifications and areas of involvement in the Diocese of Sacramento, the Sacramento community and beyond:

- Parochial vicar, parish administrator and pastor
- Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools 1958-1963
- Assistant chaplain at the Sacramento Newman Center 1958
- Chaplain to the California State Senate 1962-1963
- Member, Diocesan Priests' Senate 1969-1971
- Master's Degree in Social Work, June 1972
- Member of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- Founder and first board president (3 years) of the Latin America Mission Program
- Director of the CYO and founder of Camp Pendola
- President and chairman of the Board of Sacramento Area Economic Opportunity Council, Community Action Agency handling \$2.2 million federal dollars annually
- Licensed Marriage, Family and Child Counselor in the State of California
- Consultant to Western Regional O.E.B. special study program of State
- Founder of California Community Action Agency Association, association of Board Chairman and members of all Local Community Action Agencies in the State. Later consultant of same

- Vice-president of Metropolitan Sacramento Urban Coalition. Only Sacramentan attending original Emergency Convocation of Urban Coalition in Washington, DC, August 24, 1967
- Member of Executive Board, Sacramento Single-Men’s Self Help Organization
- Board Member, Western Region Bishop’ Committee for Spanish-Speaking
- Civic Member of Arbitration Board for both Electricians and Plumbers Unions and Contractors
- Member of Community Planning Associates, consultant group specializing in urban, rural, community development, social and health planning—foreign and domestic. Did consultant work with private and government agencies in the United States, Mexico and Guatemala
- Chaplain, Squadron 32, Civil Air Patrol – Experienced search pilot
- Member of City-County Consolidated Steering Committee, 1971
- Member, Citizens Committee for Local Governmental Reorganization, 1972. Chairman, Public Involvement sub-committee.

#### **A PUBLIC SCHOOL NAMED IN HONOR OF FATHER KEITH KENNY**



Photo by John E Boll

#### **Father Keith B Kenny Elementary School** Oak Park, Sacramento, California

In 1986, the Sacramento City Unified School District decided a new school was needed in the Oak Park area of Sacramento and the process to build the school began. On August 28, 1989, the Sacramento School District selected the name of the Oak Park School. The person to be honored

was Father Keith B Kenny who had done so much for inner city children of the area in his work of social justice. The school, located at 3525 Martin Luther King, Jr Boulevard, Sacramento, is a K-8 grade school with 436 students. According to the school website, the goals of the school are as follows:

**Father Keith B Kenny (KBK) K-8 School is one of the Superintendent's Priority Schools. Our mission is to create a culture of excellence where we educate all students to proficiency or above in all academic areas and in character, and where we provide the strong foundation needed for success in college and or career. With a laser-like focus on academic achievement, KBK's dedicated team of lifelong learners provides students with engaging, standards-based, data driven instruction in core subjects and with valuable learning experiences in the arts (KBK is a Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts "Any Given Child" pilot school). The latest technology is used to enhance teaching and learning. At KBK, we are committed to providing our students with a learning environment that has high expectations, is rigorous, relevant, culturally-inclusive, safe and loving which inspires all students to believe, work hard, strive for excellence and achieve. KBK is also committed to change and continuous improvement. MESA, a music team, student leadership club and mentoring groups enhance students' academic and social growth.**

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

Father Keith Kenny was an amazingly talented person who loved life and loved people. He was keenly intelligent, well-educated, a clear thinker and accomplished in so many areas it boggles the human mind! He was a man for all seasons.

He said of himself that he was a romantic who loved music, poetry, planning and teaching. He loved Hispanic people, culture, music, food and language. He had a Mexican heart and his heart became enraged when he saw people treated unjustly and with no respect. He focused the anger in his gut into action to address the wrong. He took strong stands against any injustice and worked tirelessly to bring about change so those pushed to the perimeters of society had a place at the table where decisions were made.

Father Keith was a leader and prophetic voice who was not afraid to challenge anyone who wanted to keep the *status quo* at the expense of the lives of the poor and marginalized. His death at 58 years of age was a tragic loss for the cause of justice in so many areas.

We who had the privilege of knowing Keith and working with him know we stood in the shadow of a giant in the work of justice for all. Thank you, Father Keith, for sharing your life and ministry with us. You made a difference in this world and now you are numbered as one of the great saints from Sacramento in the realm of God's Kingdom that knows no time but only eternity.

*Rest now from your labors and be at Peace!*

THE SENATE  
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE



A MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

*By Senator David Roberti*

RELATIVE TO MEMORIALIZING FATHER KEITH BERNARDO KENNY

*WHEREAS, It was with the most profound sorrow and a deep sense of loss that word was received of the passing of Father Keith Bernardo Kenny, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., of the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento; and*

*WHEREAS, Father Kenny was born in Omaha, Nebraska and raised in Sacramento, graduated from Christian Brothers' High School, was third in his graduating class from the California Maritime Academy, and served his country during World War II as a Deck Officer and Second Mate in the United States Merchant Marines; and*

*WHEREAS, Following his military service and graduation with a Bachelor's degree from St. Patrick's College, Father Kenny attended St. Patrick's School of Theology, and was ordained a Priest on May 1, 1954; and*

*WHEREAS, He later received his Master of Social Work degree from California State University at Sacramento, became a licensed Marriage, Family, and Child Counselor, and was a Professor in the School of Social Work at CSUS; and*

*WHEREAS, During his years with the Catholic Diocese of Sacramento, Father Kenny displayed an exceptional devotion to the responsible discharge of his duties, including his service as Executive Director of the Catholic Youth Organization, Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services, Director of the Division of Social Welfare, and Director of Research and Planning; and*

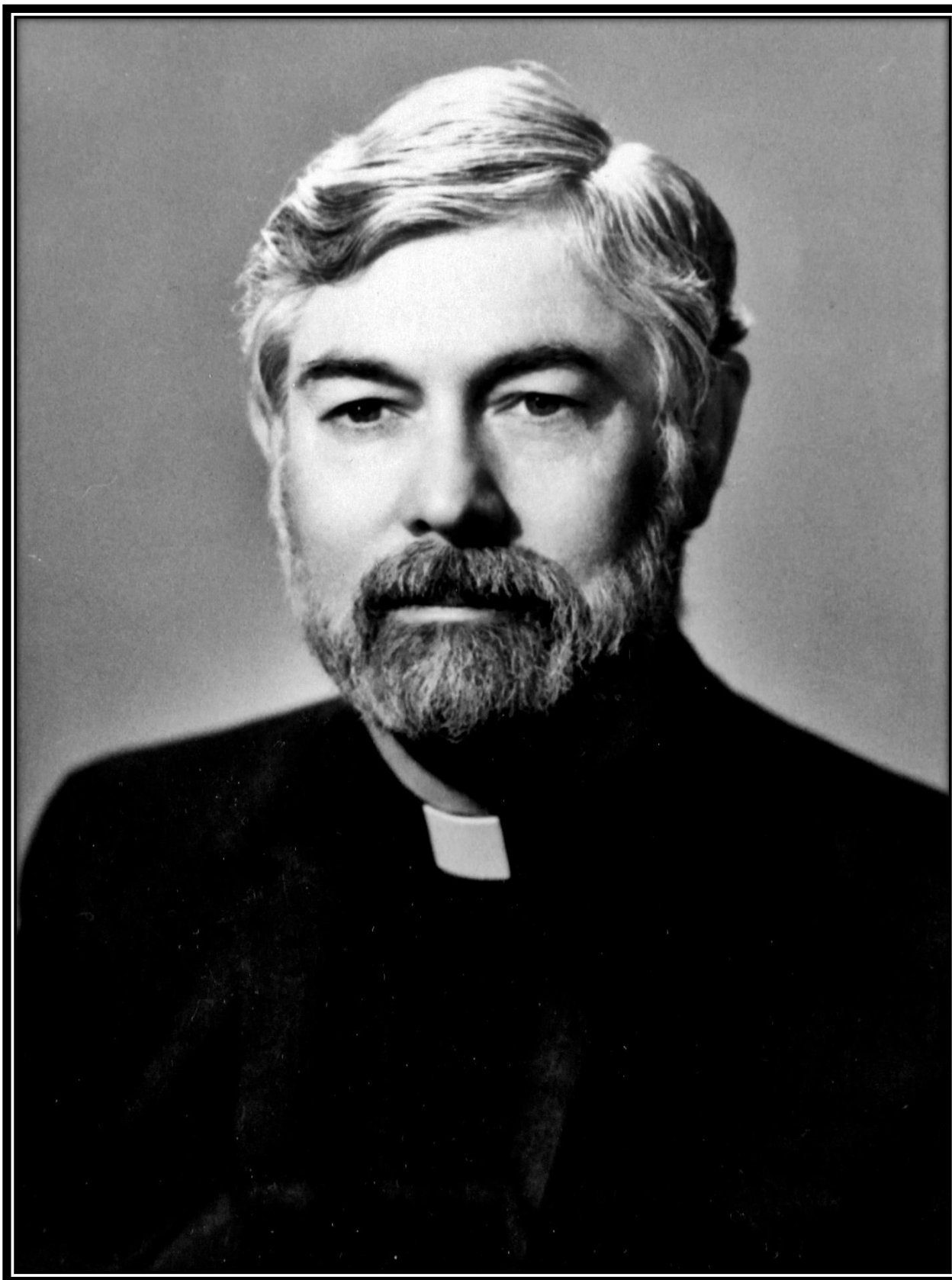
*WHEREAS, Father Kenny was a tribute not only to the priesthood, but to the State of California, constantly giving of himself to others; and he endeared himself to the Spanish-speaking community by becoming involved in community development programs and espousing the rights of his parishioners in both local and state political arenas; and*

*WHEREAS, Father Kenny was affiliated with numerous civic and charitable organizations, including his service as Chairman of the Sacramento County Planning Commission, a founder and the first Board President of the Latin American Mission Program, a founder of the Sacramento Concilio, Inc., a founder of the California Community Action Agency Association, and a Vice President of the Metropolitan Sacramento Urban Coalition; and he had served as Chaplain to the State Senate during 1962; and*

*WHEREAS, He is survived by his brother, Thomas; and his sister, Margaret Mary; now, therefore, be it*

*RESOLVED BY THE SENATE RULES COMMITTEE, That the Members express their deepest sympathy at the passing of Father Keith Bernardo Kenny, and, by this resolution, memorialize his dedicated service to the priesthood, his community, state, and nation, as well as the love and devotion he gave to his family and friends; and be it further*

*RESOLVED, That suitably prepared copies of this resolution be transmitted to Thomas Kenny, Margaret Mary Kenny, and Bishop Francis Quinn on behalf of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.*



*Father Keith Bernard Kenny*