

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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Father John E Boll

No 68

Monsignor Eymard Joseph Gallagher

Native of Nicolaus, California

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor of Our Lady of the Presentation Parish, Sacramento, CA

February 22, 1922 – November 12, 1989



Eymard Joseph Gallagher was born on February 22, 1922 at home on the family ranch in Nicolaus, California to Anthony James Gallagher and Marie Cecilia Eymard. He was baptized on May 14, 1922 at Saint Rose Church in Roseville by Father Daniel Twomey, pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln. Eymard was a third generation native Californian and he had a younger sister named Dolora.

BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

Eymard began his education at Marcum Illinois School in East Nicolaus in 1928 and graduated from grammar school in 1936. He transferred to East Nicolaus High School and when he graduated in 1940, he was class valedictorian.

BEGINS HIS COLLEGE CAREER

In the fall of 1940, Eymard began his freshman year of college at Saint Mary's College in Moraga and graduated *magna cum laude* on December 8, 1943 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history with a minor in English and philosophy. During his college years, Eymard had a nearly perfect A average. One of his professors noted: "Eymard is among the five most brilliant students I have taught in fifteen years. His character and general qualifications are above reproach."



Photo by John E Boll

Chapel of Saint Mary College, Moraga, CA

JOINS THE US NAVY

While in college, Eymard was sworn into the United States Naval Reserve on October 3, 1942 and after graduating from college, began active duty on March 6, 1944 at United States Naval Reserve Midshipman School, New York City, NY. He was assigned to the *USS Frontier* and served as an ensign aboard a landing craft. He survived both a torpedo attack during the invasion of Okinawa and a subsequent destructive Pacific typhoon. He was discharged after World War II as a lieutenant junior grade.

STUDIES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

Eymard began thinking about priesthood while a student at Saint Mary College and during his two years of military service. His desire to be a priest strengthened and it became clear to him that God was calling him to the priesthood to serve the community of faith.

In 1946, Eymard entered Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park to begin studies for the priesthood as a seminarian for the Diocese of Sacramento. He was one of the few native Californians to study for the diocesan priesthood for the Diocese of Sacramento in the mid-1940s.

As Eymard approached ordination, Father Thomas C Mulligan, SS, Rector of Saint Patrick Seminary, sent a letter to Bishop Armstrong stating that the seminary faculty recommended Deacon Gallagher for ordination. In his letter, Father Mulligan stated: "Mr. Gallagher has a very fine mind, and has used far more than students generally do, the opportunities he has had for an education. He is capable of doing further studies with distinction, we believe. He promises to become a very fine preacher. He has an admirable character, and we think he should prove a very valuable priest in the service of Your Excellency's diocese."



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park, California

ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR SACRAMENTO

Eymard Joseph Gallagher, native son of California and the Diocese of Sacramento, was ordained a priest by Bishop Robert John Armstrong on June 16, 1951 in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento. The next day, he celebrated his First Mass at Saint Boniface Church in Nicolaus, a mission of Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln, where he and his family regularly attended Sunday Mass.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Boniface Church, Nicolaus

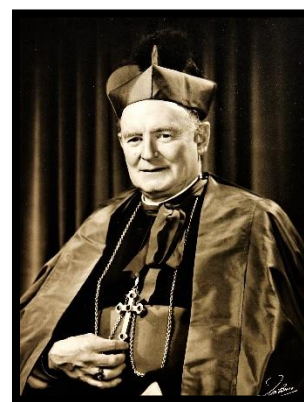
FATHER GALLAGHER BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

For his first parochial assignment, Bishop Armstrong appointed Father Gallagher to Saint James Church in Davis. The pastor of Davis was Father Bernard McElwee. Father Gallagher served the Davis parish for two years, 1951 to 1953, as parish assistant and as Newman Chaplain to the students attending UC Davis.



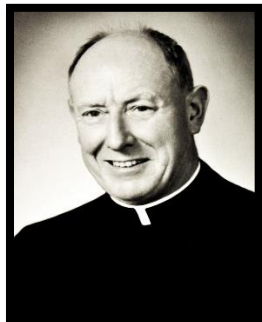
Father McElwee

In 1952, Father McElwee was named founding pastor of Saint Isidore Parish in Yuba City and left Davis. He was succeeded by Father Paul Degan as the new pastor of Saint James Parish.



Bishop Armstrong

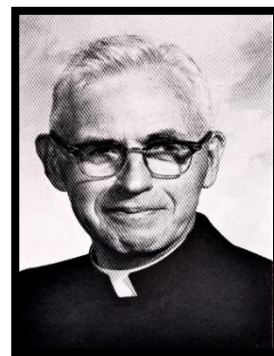
Father Gallagher worked with Father Degnan for one year and then was transferred to Assumption Parish in Carmichael for one year, 1953-54, working with Father Thomas Bannon who was pastor of the parish.



Father Bannon

While assigned to Assumption Parish, Father Gallagher was also assigned part time to the diocesan Marriage Tribunal from 1953 to 1958.

Assumption Parish was created in 1950 and was just getting started when Father Gallagher joined Father Bannon at the parish. Masses were held in the parish hall until there were sufficient resources to build a permanent church. The hall in the photograph below served as the church for a number of years.



Father Degnan



Photo by John E Boll

Assumption Parish Hall was used as the Church

CHAPLAIN TO THE CENACLE

In 1954, Father Gallagher was assigned as chaplain of the Cenacle Retreat Center in Carmichael which was operated by the Cenacle Sisters. The retreat house was a former mansion on Fair Oaks Boulevard which the sisters purchased and made into a retreat center.

Father Gallagher lived in an apartment at the Cenacle Retreat Center and celebrated Mass for the sisters and for groups who came to the center on retreat.

Since Father Gallagher was gifted with a keen mind which he continued to develop throughout his life, he became a skilled preacher as Father Mulligan predicted. Years later, his sister Dolora gathered Eymard's written homilies and bound them into book form so his wisdom would not be lost to future generations.

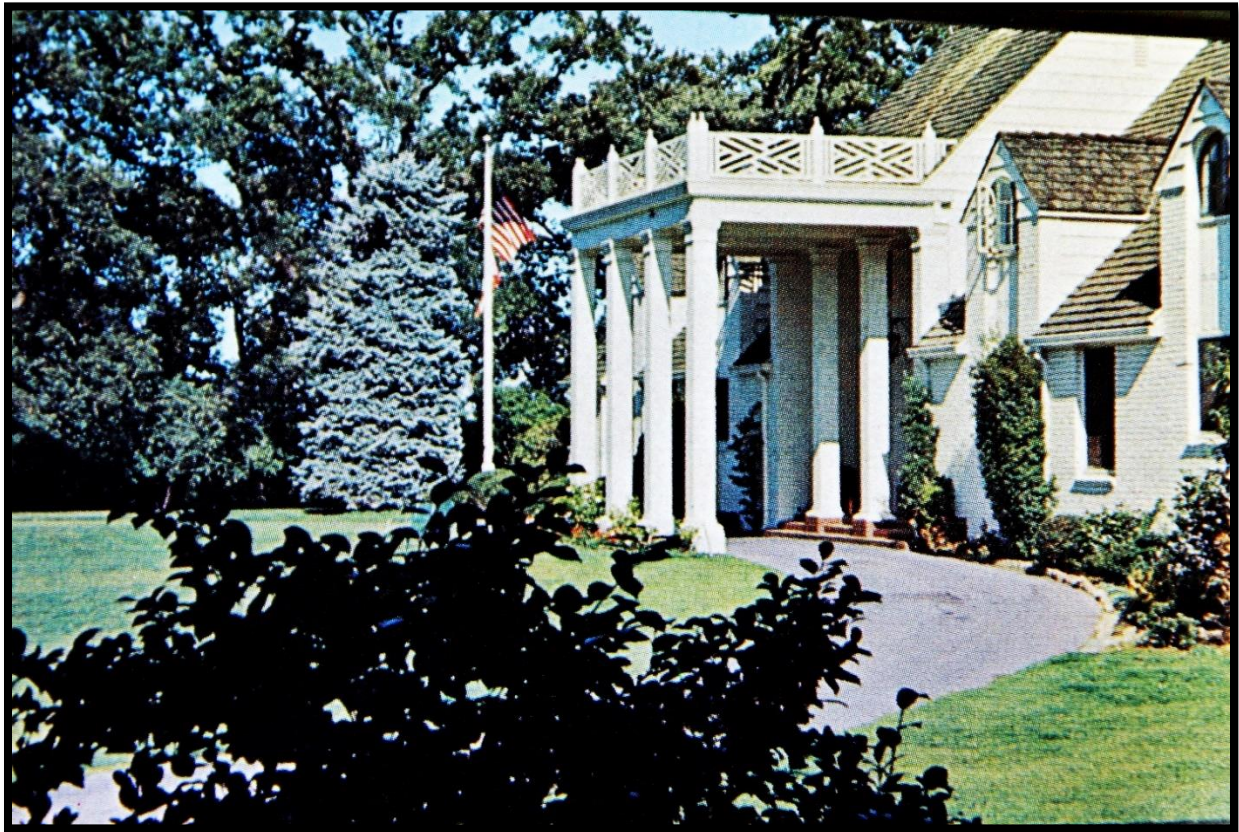


Photo from the Diocesan Archives

The Cenacle Retreat House in Carmichael

ASSIGNED TO BISHOP ARMSTRONG HIGH SCHOOL



In 1957, Father Gallagher was assigned to Bishop Armstrong High School in Sacramento as an instructor for the academic year 1957-58 by newly installed Bishop Joseph T McGucken. After his short assignment at this high school, the school's name was once again returned to its original name as Christian Brothers High School.

EDITOR OF THE *CATHOLIC HERALD*



Bishop McGucken

On January 15, 1958, Bishop McGucken appointed Father Gallagher to be editor of the *Superior California Catholic Herald* as it was then called. He continued as editor of the diocesan newspaper for sixteen years. His keen mind and clear writing skills were put to good use as he wrote thought provoking and informative editorials on various subjects.

The *Catholic Herald* office was located in the diocesan owned building on Newman Court west of the Sacramento Newman Center.

Monsignor Gallagher served as editor of the diocesan newspaper from 1958 to 1974. In his December 20, 1973 editorial called "In Conclusion," he stated: "When an editor takes a stand he becomes vulnerable. There may be some readers out there with facts on the subject he did not have. He may find that his attempt at clarification actually muddied the waters. If he delves into the issues that count in people's lives, he is bound to encounter disagreement. And he has to live with his own inadequacies for conversion. But as Harry Truman would say, if he can't stand the heat, he should get out of the kitchen."

Father George Schuster, SDS, editor of the *Catholic Herald* when Monsignor Gallagher died, wrote an editorial about him which was printed in the *Herald* on November 22, 1989. He wrote: "Monsignor Gallagher tackled issues and took positions on the death penalty, gun control, conscientious objection, the Vietnam War, the rights of farm workers, and the grape boycott which rankled many of his readers. They charged him with being liberal, leftist, socialist, communist and heretical. Even his eagerness to see the prompt implementation of the Second Vatican Council, especially its Decree on the Liturgy, drew occasional criticism and expressions of distress.

"He seemed at times to relish the heat of the argument and to be almost uncomfortable when it was not being applied. He disdained an opponent whose arguments were specious and could not be backed up by facts. However, he was not motivated by argument for its own sake. He was driven by a conscientious and responsible search for truth. The cutting insights he was capable of writing about actually belied his generally shy and retiring demeanor."

As official representative of the diocesan press, Monsignor Gallagher attended the opening session of the last gathering of bishops at the Vatican Council in 1965. The Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada awarded Monsignor Gallagher its "Best Editorial of the Year Award" for his 1966 position against California's Proposition 16 of that election year. "The measure," he said, "would not curb pornography and obscenity, as its backers (among them many prominent Catholics) claimed, but would instead endanger the constitutional process."

He also received that same coveted award for his October 1972 editorial in which he took a stand against Proposition 17, a California death penalty initiative. He was commended in 1974 by the California State Senate for distinguished service to the Northern California public.

NAMED MONSIGNOR

On July 21, 1965, Father Gallagher was named Papal Chamberlain by Pope Paul VI in recognition of his skilled work as editor of the *Catholic Herald*. On January 21, 1977, Pope Paul VI honored Monsignor Gallagher once again by naming him a Prelate of Honor to His Holiness.

FATHER JAMES MURPHY ASSIGNED TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Father James Murphy was ordained a priest in 1968 at All Hallows College, Ireland, and appointed to his first assignment in Sacramento as assistant pastor of the Cathedral. In 1969, Monsignor Cornelius Higgins, Chancellor, quite unexpectedly told Father Murphy that Bishop Bell was appointing him to assist at the *Catholic Herald*. Father Murphy worked part time at the paper and part time at the Cathedral during 1969. He spoke with Bishop Bell and told him if he was going to continue working at the *Catholic Herald*, he needed training in journalism. Bishop Bell asked Father Murphy where he would like to go for training and he told the bishop, UC Berkeley.

This was the time when Berkeley was experiencing social unrest, upheaval and violence on its streets and on campus and Bishop Bell wanted Father Murphy to go to the Jesuit Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for training. Father Murphy held his ground for UC Berkeley and the bishop reluctantly agreed to send him to Berkeley. Bishop Bell said to Father Murphy, “I hope you do not come back from there with more problems than you had going there.” He enrolled in the UC Berkeley School of Journalism where he earned his Master’s Degree in Journalism.



Photo courtesy of the *Catholic Herald* office

Monsignor Gallagher's Office at the *Catholic Herald*

He returned to the diocese and began working full time at the *Catholic Herald* for two years. Monsignor Gallagher and his associate editor, Eleanor Doyle, were both chain smokers and smoked in the *Herald* office. Whenever Father Murphy went into Monsignor Gallagher's office to talk with him, the office was filled with a gray haze of cigarette smoke. It was like an Old Testament encounter with God surrounded in fire and smoke. This was before state laws were enacted prohibiting smoking in public places.

APPOINTED PASTOR OF OUR LADY OF GRACE PARISH, WEST SACRAMENTO

On October 21, 1969, Monsignor Gallagher was named to his first pastorate at Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento in addition to being editor of the *Catholic Herald*. As demands of parish life grew, he decided it was time for him to step down as editor of the diocesan newspaper. He wrote to Bishop Bell requesting to retire as editor of the paper.



Photo by John E Boll

Our Lady of Grace Church, West Sacramento

On December 18, 1973, Bishop Bell responded to Monsignor Gallagher's request to retire as editor of the *Catholic Herald*, saying:

"It is not without reluctance that we accept your resignation as Editor of our Catholic Herald, effective January 1, 1974.

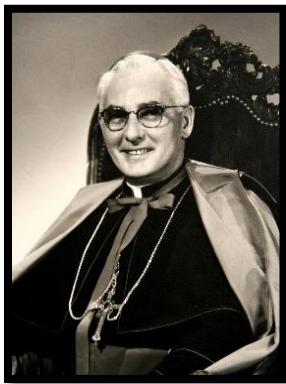
"We want you to know that we deeply appreciate the hard work which you have done and the uphill struggle which you have endured over the past sixteen years in order to keep the Catholic Herald viable. Through your constancy and efficiency, you have made the Herald a most credible newspaper, as evidenced by the recurring awards which it received on a national level.

Gifted as you are with a flair for writing, we and the people of Sacramento have to feel enriched by your literary contributions to our Christian culture and heritage. May God bless and reward you for your untiring zeal and unstinted efforts."

Monsignor Gallagher retired as editor of the *Catholic Herald* on January 1, 1974 and Father Murphy became the editor of the *Herald* that same day.

Monsignor Gallagher then turned his full attention to his pastoral work at Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento where he served as pastor from 1969 to 1975. He served only one year in West Sacramento as fulltime pastor before he was given a new parish assignment. All the while, he continued to serve on various diocesan boards and committees.

PASTOR OF PRESENTATION PARISH, SACRAMENTO



Bishop Alden Bell

Bishop Bell appointed Monsignor Gallagher to his last pastorate at Presentation Parish in Sacramento on July 1, 1975. He arrived in the parish soon after the completion of construction of the new parish church. He served Presentation parish as pastor for fourteen years until he was diagnosed with advanced Metastatic Colorectal Cancer which was terminal for him.

A few weeks before Monsignor Gallagher's death, Father Murphy visited him at the hospital and he told Father Murphy: "I now am going to have to live in my own life all the things I used to say and write about

the cross." He died at Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento on November 12, 1989 at the age of 67.

During his thirty-seven years of priesthood, Monsignor Gallagher's various appointments included part-time UC Davis Newman Club chaplain 1951-53; part-time teacher at Bishop Armstrong High School 1956-1958; Diocesan Director of the Bureau of Information, 1958; Editor of *Superior California Catholic Herald*, 1958-1974; Defender of the Bond, Diocesan Tribunal, 1960; Diocesan Director of Cana Conferences, 1962; Diocesan Liturgical Commission member and chairman, 1963-1977; Pro-Synodal Judge 1969; Diocesan Priests' Senate, 1969-1971; Chairman of Diocesan Social Concerns Commission, 1980-1984.

Monsignor Gallagher was involved in many areas of diocesan leadership through the various committees and commissions which he served as a member to the day of his death.



Photo by John E Boll

Presentation Church, Sacramento

A TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR GALLAGHER

Two weeks before Monsignor Gallagher's death on November 12, 1989, a parishioner of Presentation Parish wrote to Bishop Quinn to express his gratitude for Monsignor Gallagher with a copy sent to Monsignor Gallagher as well. Parts of that letter follow:

October 27, 1989

Your Excellency:

For a long while I have thought of writing you about our beloved pastor of Presentation Parish, Monsignor Eymard J Gallagher. I refrained because I thought he might be a little embarrassed and might also think I was somewhat of a sycophant.

We often wait until a loved one is gone before we say the good things we should have said about them much earlier, and that is what I wish to do now. Although this is addressed to you, Your Excellency, I am also sending a copy to Eymard.

Eymard is an outstanding priest and has been a wonderful pastor. I have been in a number of parishes for extended times in my fifty-nine years, and Eymard Gallagher is without a doubt the very best pastor I have encountered, and I have experienced some good ones. In addition, he has been a very good friend to me and my entire family. We along with all the members of the Presentation faith community are going to miss him very much.

When Eymard arrived, most parishioners knew little about him other than he was coming from a pastorate at Our Lady of Grace in West Sacramento and once had been editor of the Catholic Herald. Although quiet and unassuming, one could tell rather quickly that Monsignor Gallagher was a take charge guy. As was his custom during all of his pastorate at Presentation, he would appear after all of the Sunday Masses at the outside church entrance to be available to any who wished to come over to speak with him. We had to make the move; he did not force himself upon us. We could also count on his presence at all of the church social functions where he was again always unassuming. If one wished to engage him in conversation, he was most willing to accommodate, but he did not push things. This put people at ease. It took a while, but Eymard was gradually accepted by all and became deeply loved in the process.

I was for years the football coach at Presentation School when the Parochial Athletic League used to play tackle football. As I look back, it was much like the movies "Going My Way" and "Bells of St Mary's." We could count on Monsignor Gallagher being at the games and that really meant a great deal to the young football players and their parents. We even occasionally saw him observing our practices. He would announce the scores of the Saturday games at Sunday Mass. Things like this really contributed to the spirit of togetherness that prevailed at Presentation during Eymard's pastorate. He was involved and on top of everything, but always in his own quiet way.

Beyond all of this, Eymard was most of all a man of God. He was patient, compassionate, and caring. Many of us commented how often he seemed to take in the priests that were possibly not too welcome in other places. But never a word from Eymard. Also I never heard anybody who did not enjoy and look forward to his Sunday sermons or homilies as they are now called. They always had much substance to them.

Most of all, however, Eymard was a dear personal friend to me and all of my family. He was a frequent guest at our house. It was a family tradition that we watch the Notre Dame – U.S.C. game, the New Year's Day bowl games, and the Superbowl together. In addition, we shared a number of backyard barbecues as well.

It is good for young people to experience the presence of a priest outside the formal religious settings. My children were fortunate to experience that as both youngsters and young adults with Eymard. I can remember clearly my daughter when she was little climbing upon the sofa and sliding over next to Eymard and smiling from ear to ear as he put his arm around her. My four sons will never forget him either. They will always remember the privilege of going to a 49er game as the guest of "the Monsignor." And my wife who played the organ at so many of his Masses, will remember his kind comments to her before and after Mass.

Excellency, the Diocese of Sacramento and the Catholic Church have been blessed to receive the long labors of a devoted and native son in Eymard Gallagher. He is one of God's finest as a human being, but he made his greatest mark as a faithful servant and priest of the Lord. We shall not see the likes of him again, and we shall all be the poorer for it.

To Eymard:

Good bye and God bless. As I said when taking leave after the Notre Dame –U.S.C. game, we won't make this New Year's together, but my family and I will always remember the many good times we shared. Put in a good word for us when you get the Lord's ear up there.

FUNERAL FOR MONSIGNOR GALLAGHER

The body of Monsignor Gallagher was received at Presentation Church on the evening of November 15, 1989 followed by a Vigil liturgy presided over by Father Martin Brusato who was the parochial vicar of the parish. Father James Murphy, pastor of Saint Anne Parish in Sacramento, was the homilist at the Vigil.

In the sanctuary during the Vigil, beside Fathers Brusato and Murphy, were Bishops Quinn and Gallegos and Monsignor Cornelius Higgins. The Vigil included the rosary with a decade led by each of the three priests and two bishop in the sanctuary.

On Thursday morning, the Funeral Mass was celebrated in Presentation Church by Bishops Francis Quinn, Alphonse Gallegos and Archbishop Francis Hurley, classmate of Monsignors Gallagher and Fagundes at Saint Patrick Seminary, with many priests of the diocese concelebrating. The church was filled with family, friends, parishioners, priests and religious. Monsignor Val Fagundes was the homilist. The Final Commendation at the end of the Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska. A reception was held after the Mass in the Presentation Parish Hall for all who attended the Funeral Mass.

BURIAL

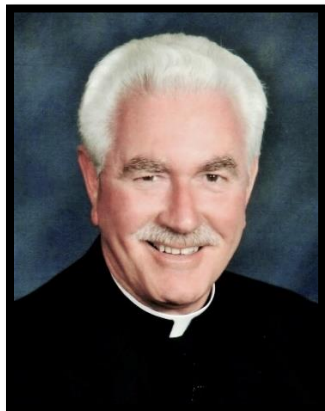
After lunch, the body of Monsignor Gallagher was taken in process to Calvary Cemetery for burial in the priests' section of the cemetery. After the prayers of Committal were offered to the Lord for Monsignor Gallagher, all departed.



Photo by John E Boll

Monsignor Gallagher's Headstone, Calvary Cemetery

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Eymard Joseph Gallagher was a third generation Californian and a native son of the Diocese of Sacramento. It was rare in 1946 to have a native born person enter the seminary for the Sacramento diocese.

Eymard was gifted with a keen mind. He was valedictorian in 1940 when he graduated from East Nicolaus High School and in college, he graduated *magna cum laude* from Saint Mary's College in Moraga. When Father Mulligan, Rector of Saint Patrick Seminary, sent the seminary faculty's recommendation to Bishop Armstrong that Eymard be ordained a priest, he noted that "Eymard was capable of doing further studies with distinction."

Eymard was quiet by nature but his brilliant mind was constantly at work. He became an excellent preacher and when Monsignor John Cummins was named auxiliary bishop of Sacramento, Monsignor Gallagher was asked to be the preacher at Bishop Cummins' ordination.

After my seven years as campus minister at UC Davis and sabbatical in Israel, I was assigned to Presentation Parish in June 1981 as parochial vicar for two years with Monsignor Gallagher as pastor before I was appointed pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln in 1983. He and I always had great discussions at the dinner table and my time with him was enjoyable and pleasant.

In the evenings, Eymard was always at work on something at his desk or just pondering things in his mind. The door to his quarters was always open until he retired for the night.

He was a faithful Forty-Niner Football fan and purchased two season tickets for all the games in San Francisco. When the Forty-Niners played on Sunday in San Francisco, he celebrated the early Mass so he could get on the road and not be late for the game. He always invited a parishioner to go with him to the game.

He had a good friendship with his sister Dolora who was a college professor in San Francisco. She was brilliant too, having earned her PhD in English Literature.

Monsignor Gallagher was a quiet intellectual giant among us and we were fortunate to have him as a member of the presbyterate of the Diocese of Sacramento for thirty-seven years.

*May Monsignor Eymard be fully alive in
The Lord, enjoying eternal life
In the Kingdom of God!*



Monsignor Eymard Joseph Gallagher