

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 72

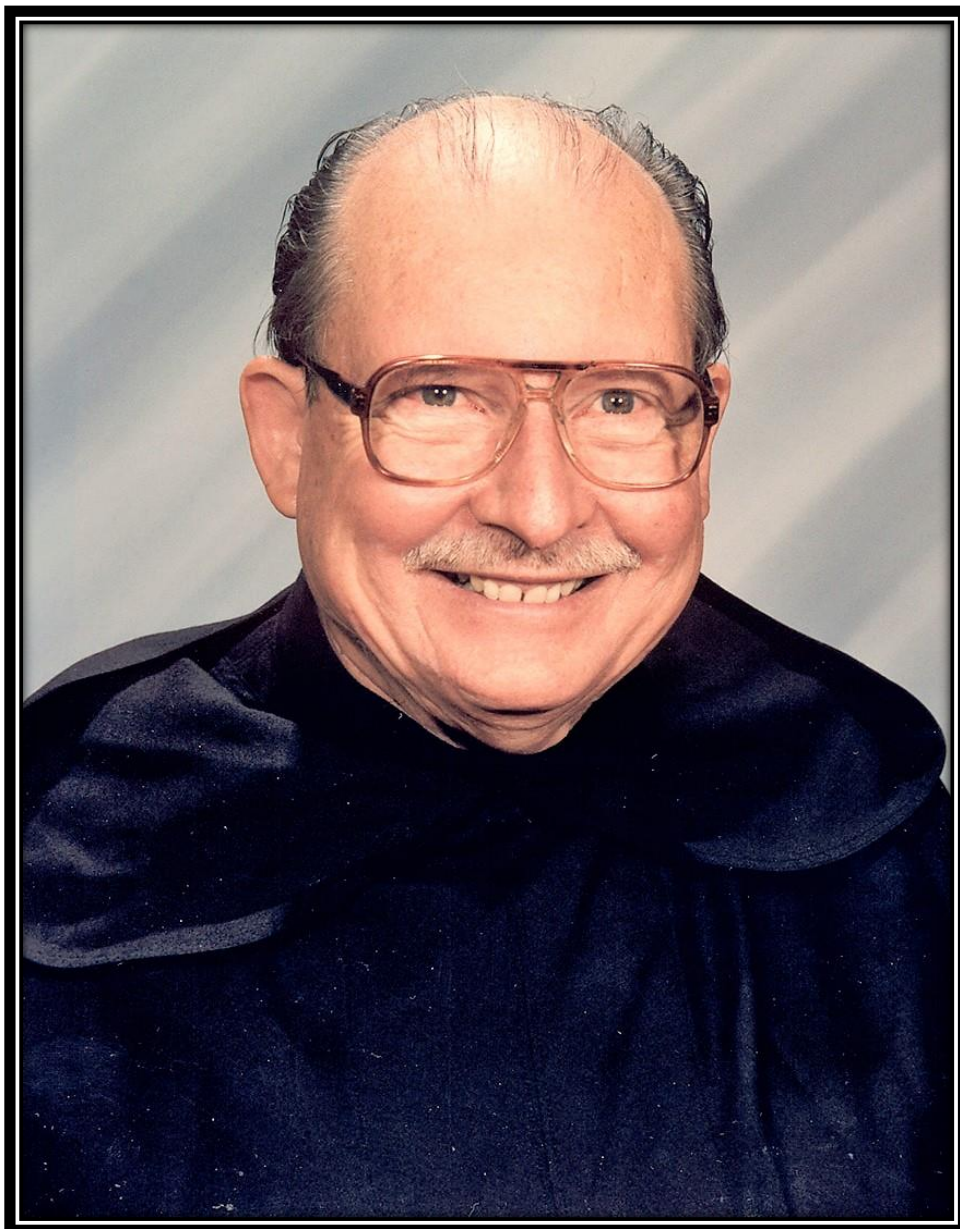
## *Father Joel Joseph Moelter, O Carm*

Native of Los Angeles, California

Member of the Order of Carmelites

Parochial Vicar of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Fairfield, CA

July 22, 1926 -- November 23, 2009



Joel Moelter was born to Leo Moelter and Anna Frances Lyons in Los Angeles, California on July 22, 1926. His baptismal name was Joseph. His only sibling was his brother John. He attended Saint John the Evangelist Grammar School and then Mount Carmel High School, both in Los Angeles. He entered the Carmelite novitiate in Middletown, New York, in 1944 and then studied philosophy at Mount Carmel College in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.



Photo from the Carmelite Website

**Mount Carmel Carmelite College, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada**



Photo from the Carmelite Website

**Mount Carmel College Chapel, Niagara Falls, Ontario**

### **STUDIED IN ROME**

After his solemn profession as a Carmelite in 1948, Joel was sent to Rome where he studied theology at the Colegio Internazionale di Sant' Alberto and was ordained a priest in July 1951. He held degrees in philosophy and theology and later received a master's degree in education from Loyola University in Los Angeles.

### **MINISTRY IN EDUCATION**

Father Joel's ministry in education included service as a teacher and vice principal at Mount Carmel High School in Los Angeles during the 1950s and 1960s and as master of students at Mount Carmel High School in Auburn, New York.

### **TEACHING CAREER**

From 1966 to 1978, Father Joel held various posts in teaching, including Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson, Arizona and Mount Carmel Junior Seminary in Niagara Falls, Canada.



Photo from Salpointe High School Website

**Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson, AZ**

## **SERVICE IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**

In 1979, the Diocese of Sacramento created a new parish in Fairfield, splitting off part of the city from Holy Spirit Parish. The original parish in Suisun, founded in 1877, was named Saint Alphonsus Parish at that time. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Fairfield was the last parish created by Bishop Alden J Bell before he retired on July 11, 1979. Bishop Bell was succeeded by Bishop Francis A Quinn who had been auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

This new parish was given to the Order of Carmelites to develop and staff. The founding pastor was Father John Hertel, O Carm, and serving with him as parochial vicar was Father Joel Moelter, O Carm. They were charged with the responsibility of developing this new parish in Fairfield. Fathers John and Joel served the parish community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish for nine years, from 1979 to 1988.



Photo from "History of the Catholic Community in Suisun-Fairfield, 1861-1986"

**Father John Hertel (L) and Father Joel Moelter (R)**

The first construction in this Carmelite parish was a multi-use building known as "The Golden Dome." It was a large round building with a gold colored dome and this building served as the first church, parish offices and education center until the permanent church was built in 2003.



Photo from "History of the Catholic Church in Suisun-Fairfield 1861-1986

**L-R, Larry Sheldon, Fr Joel and Raymond Abst, Architect, planning the first building**

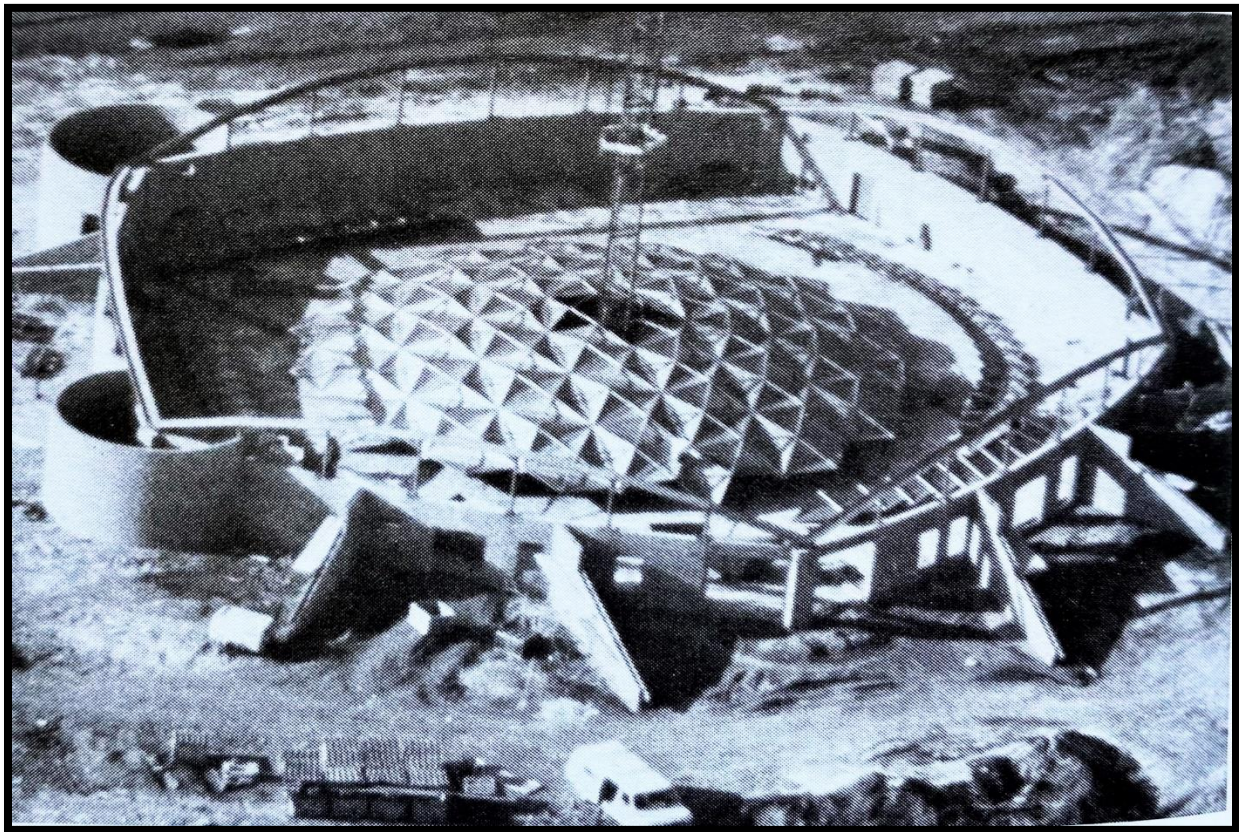


Photo from "History of the Catholic Church in Suisun-Fairfield 1861-1986

**Construction of the parish Golden Dome building**



**Aerial View of Mount Carmel in Fairfield**



Photo by John E Boll

**The first church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Fairfield**

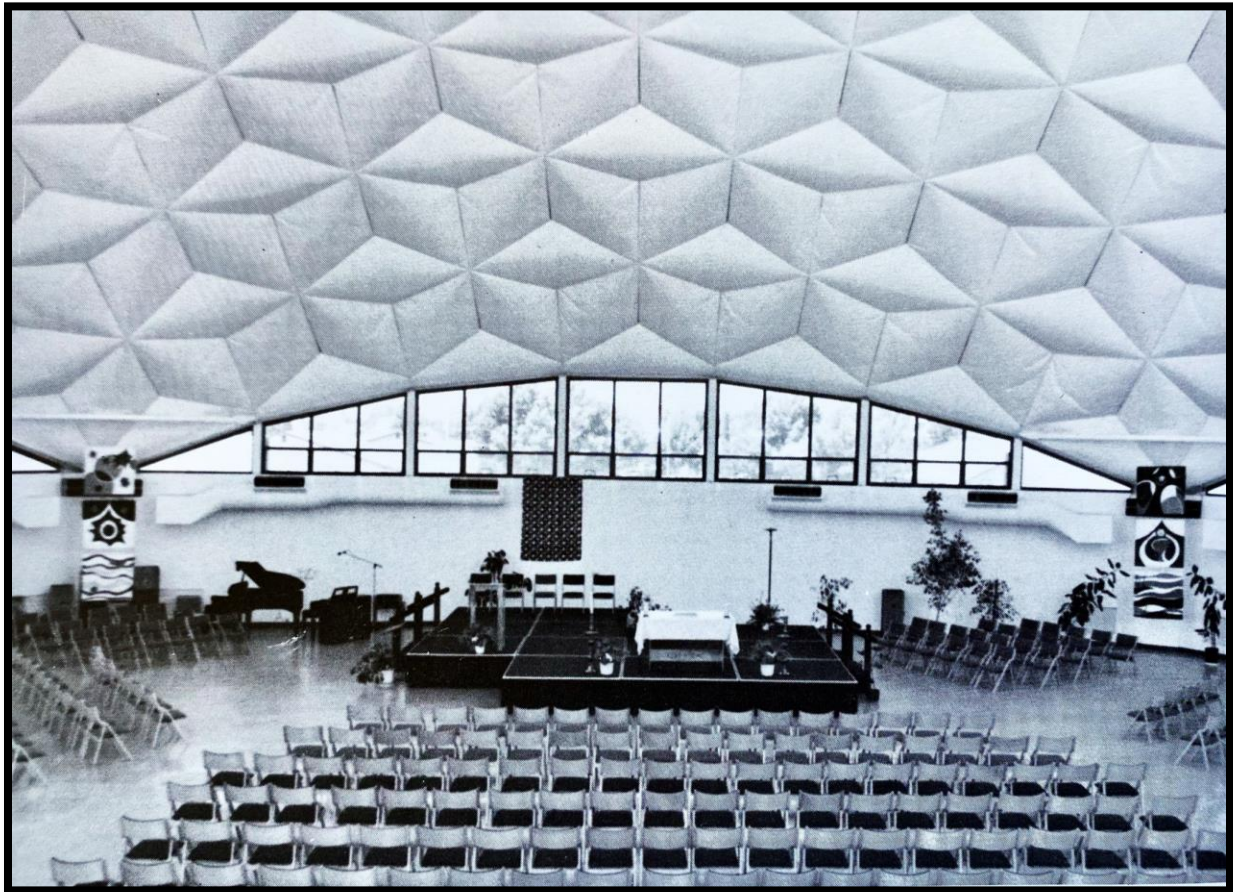


Photo from "History of the Catholic Community in Suisun-Fairfield 1861-1986

**Interior of the Golden Dome church**



**Parish Staff: L-R, Father John, Sister Constance, Brother David, Father Joel**



Photo by John E Boll

**The Permanent Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Fairfield built in 2003**



Photo from the Parish Website

**Celebration of Mass in the new Our Lady of Carmel Church in Fairfield**



### **PARISH ADMINISTRATOR IN JOLIET**

In 1988, Father Joel was transferred to Joliet, Illinois, where he was appointed administrator of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and served for six years.



Photo from the website of Our Lady of Carmel Parish, Joliet

### **The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Joliet, IL**

### **SERVICE IN COAHUILA, MEXICO**

After his six years in Joliet, Father Joel went to México where he was appointed prior of the Carmelite community and associate pastor of Transfiguration Parish in Torreón, Coahuila, México. He was involved in the Ecumenical Movement and wrote some essays about the movement since ecumenism was a major interest of his.

Father Joel also served as a chaplain of the local prison in Torreón which had a population of some 600 inmates.

While in Torreón, Father Joel celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest. In 2005, he was transferred to the Carmelite House, Casa del Carmen, in México City which was a house of formation for the Carmelite community.



Photo from the website of Our Lady of Camel, Fairfield

**Children living at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Orphanage, Torreón, México**  
**This parish received some financial help from the Carmelite parish in Fairfield**

### **FATHER JOEL'S LAST DAYS**

In 2007, Father Joel began to develop early stages of Alzheimer' disease. He returned to California and lived with his brother John and family who took care of him for a while. A member of the Carmelite Province, Father Myron Judy, O Carm, spent time visiting various health facilities that could provide Father Joel with good care before he settled on Sunrise Brighton Garden in Santa Rosa, California. This assisted living facility was a 90 minute drive from the home of his brother John.

### **THE DEATH OF FATHER JOEL**

Father Joel Moelter, O Carm, died at the Sunrise Brighton Garden care facility in Santa Rosa on Monday, November 23, 2009 at the age of 83. A Funeral Mass was celebrated for him on Saturday, November 28, 2009 at Mary, Star of the Sea Church in Gualala, the parish church of his brother John. The church is beautifully designed and is surrounded by coastal Redwood trees overlooking the Pacific Coast in Gualala. This small coastal town is about 20 miles south of Point Arena on Pacific Coast Highway 1.

The following week, the body of Father Joel was interred in the Carmelite community plot at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California. Memorial Masses were celebrated for him at Our Lady

of Mount Carmel Parish in Fairfield where he served with Father John Hertel to establish the new parish, and at Encino Catholic High School where he had been a teacher.

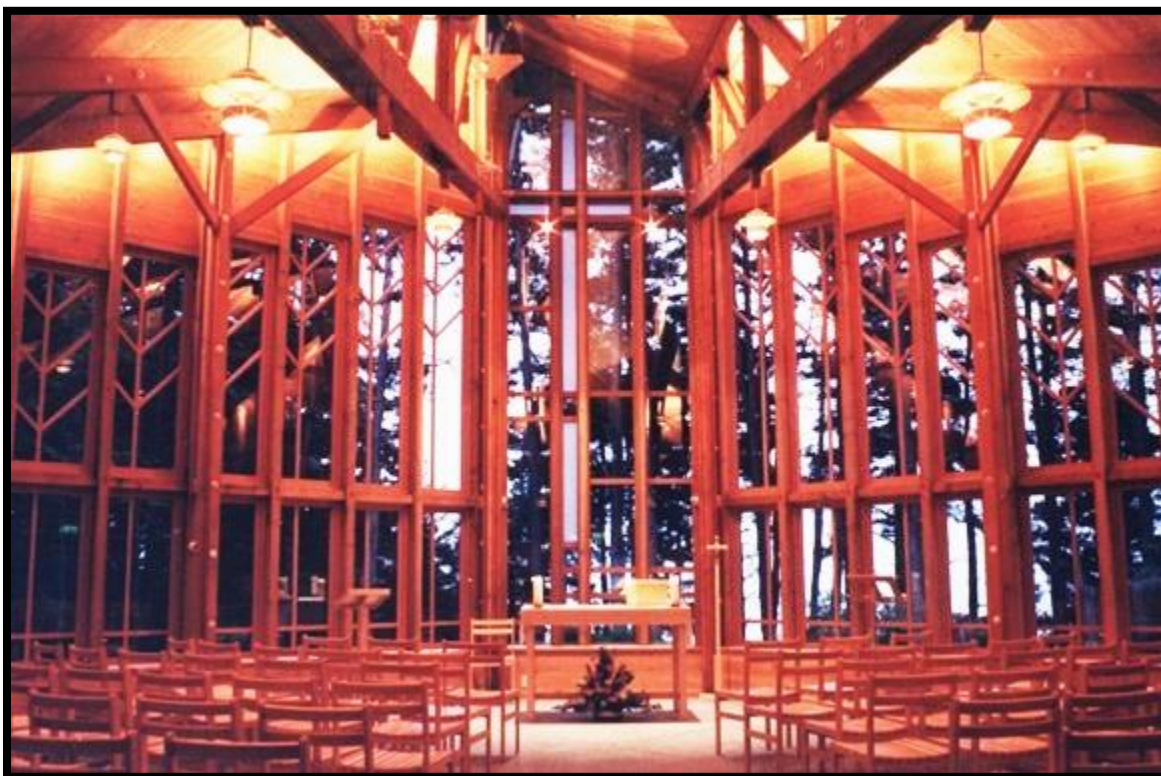


Photo from the Gualala parish website

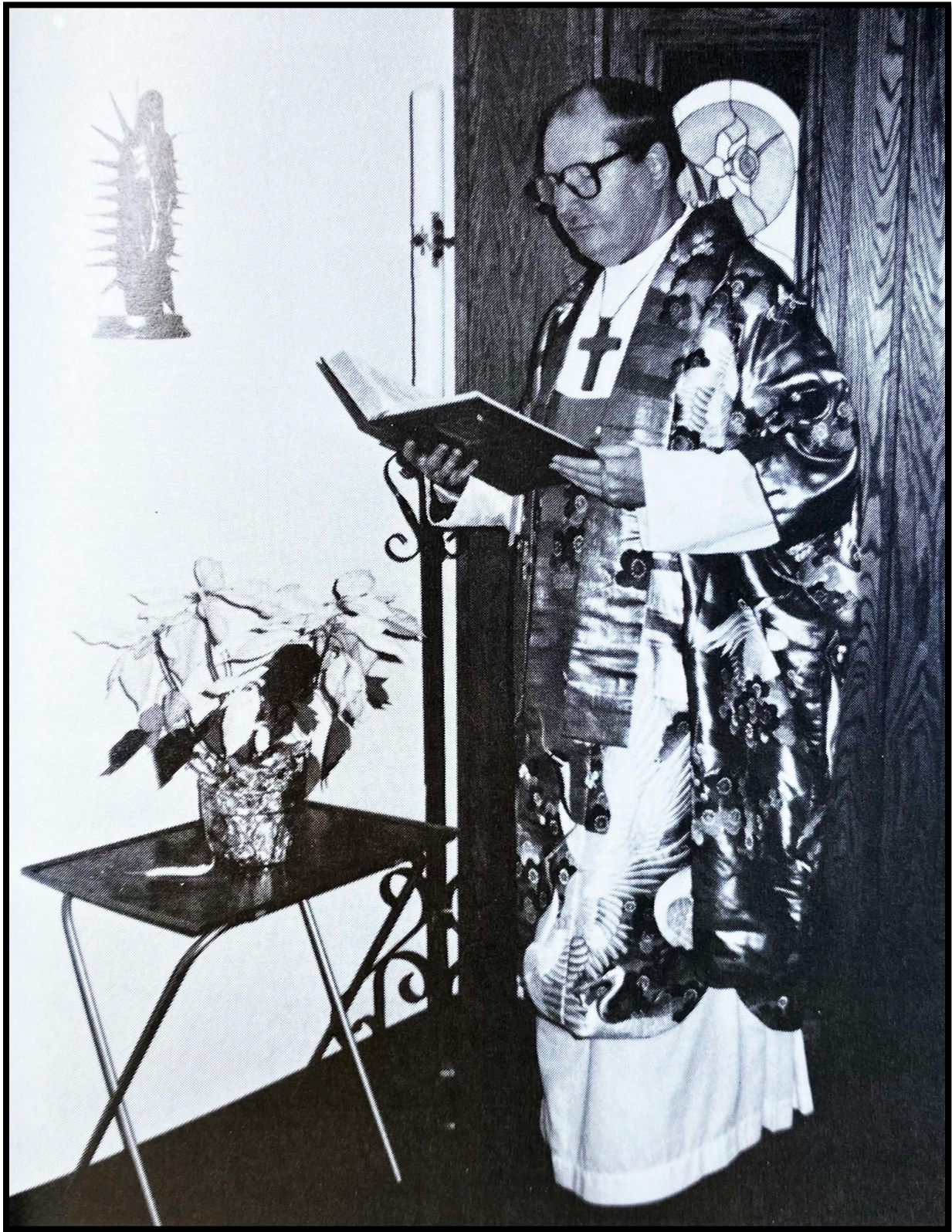
### **Mary, Star of the Sea Church, Gualala, CA**

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Father Joel Moelter, O Carm, was a well-educated, gentle, kind and humble priest. He never wanted to draw attention to himself. He had a great interest in Ecumenism and worked with pastors of other Christian churches on common projects and ministries to help those who were poor and in need of help.

Bishop Alden J Bell gave Carmelite Fathers John Hertel and Joel Moelter the task by to establish the second parish in Fairfield, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Father Joel encouraged staff and parishioners to acceptance the unique design of the Golden Dome structure that became the first building of the new parish. The Golden Dome structure became a distinctive building in Fairfield and served well the new parish community until the permanent church was built in 2003. The Golden Dome today serves as the parish office, classrooms and a large community room.

Fathers Joel Moelter and John Hertel were part of the same priest support group that I am part of and I always enjoyed our time together. Both of these Carmelite priests were caring and supportive brothers to us priests in the support group and the entire presbyterate of the diocese. I was sad to see them leave Fairfield for new assignments in the service of the Lord in other parts of the Lord's vineyard. May they both rest now in the peace of God's Kingdom!



*Father Joel Joseph Moelter, O Carm*