

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 78

Monsignor William Coen

Native of Rossmarin, Milltown, County Galway, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Red Bluff, California

November 2, 1883 – April 8, 1963



William Coen, son of Patrick Coen and Ellen Healy, was born in Rossmarin, Milltown, County Galway, Ireland, on November 2, 1883. He was baptized in the Milltown Parish Church in the Archdiocese of Tuam.

WILLIAM BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

William began his education at the Dalgin National School in Milltown Parish, County Galway, in 1890 and continued at that school until 1898. For his high school education, he transferred to Saint Jarlath Collage in Tuam, County Galway, in 1898 until he completed his courses in 1903.

BEGINS CLASSES AT ALL HALLOWS COLLEGE

In the fall of 1903, William began his theological studies at All Hallows College in Dublin until he completed his theological studies in 1909.



Photo from the book, *The Missionary College of All Hallows, 1848 -1891*, by Kevin Condon, CM
All Hallows College, Dublin, Ireland

ORDAINED A PRIEST

On June 24, 1909, William Coen was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento in the All Hallows College Chapel, Dublin, Ireland, by Bishop Kelly, formerly of Ross, Ireland

THE JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

After his ordination to the priesthood, Father Coen spent a couple of months with his family before setting sail from Ireland to New York and then by train across America to Sacramento. He arrived in Sacramento in early October 1909. Bishop Thomas Grace, the bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento and also a native of Ireland, welcomed him to Sacramento.

FATHER CAEN'S FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Bishop Grace assigned the newly arrived Father Coen to Saint Patrick Parish in Placerville as assistant to Father Dennis Horgan who was pastor. Father Coen served the Placerville Catholic community for three years, 1909 to 1912.

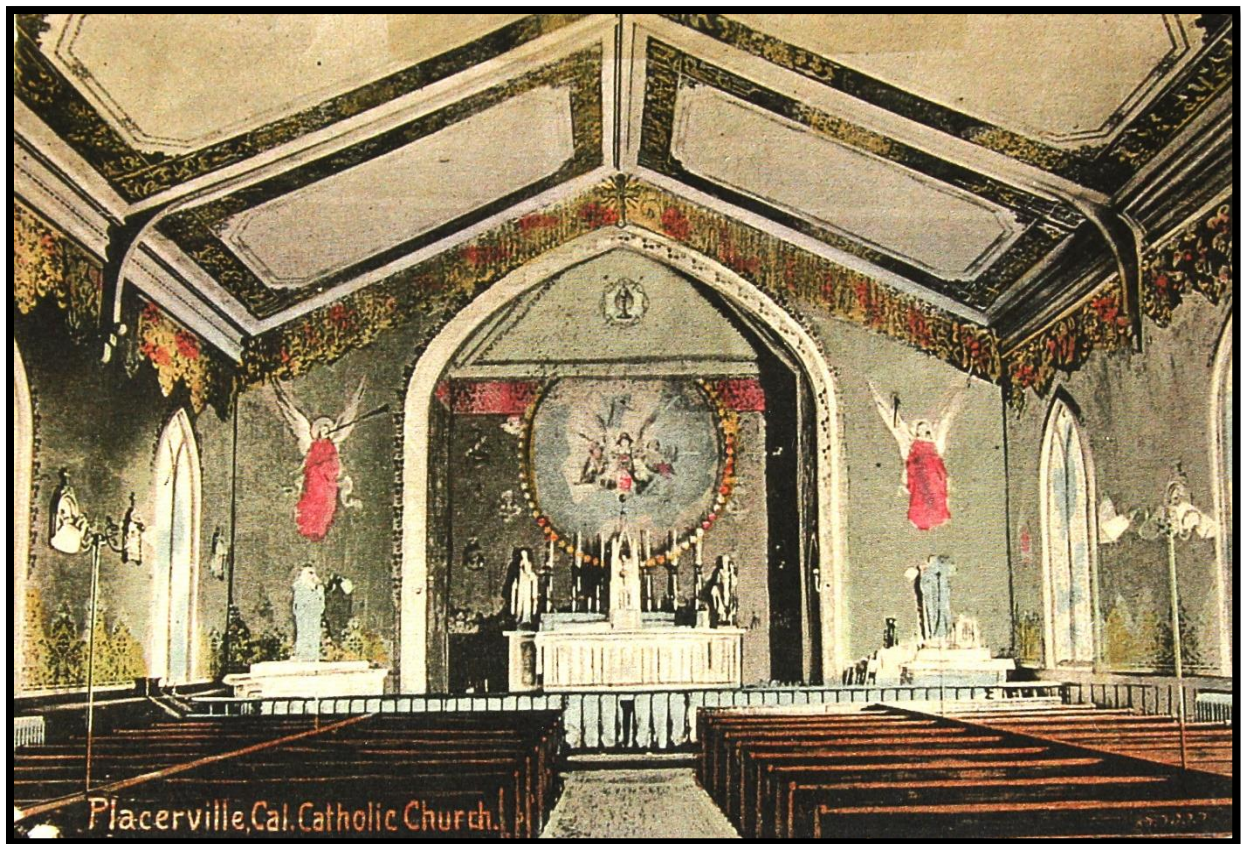


Photo from the St Patrick Parish Archives

Interior of Saint Patrick Church, Placerville, in 1908

SECOND PARISH ASSIGNMENT, MARYSVILLE

After three years in Placerville, Father Coen was next assigned as assistant pastor of Saint Joseph Church in Marysville beginning in 1912. Saint Joseph Church, built during the pastorate of Father Peter Maganotto in the early 1850s, was designated the first Cathedral of the Vicariate of Marysville which was established on September 27, 1860 with Father Eugene O'Connell, a professor of All Hallows College Seminary in Dublin, Ireland, named as the first bishop of the Vicariate of Marysville by Pope Pius IX.

Father Coen was appointed assistant priest to Father Matthew Coleman who was pastor of the Marysville church. He served Saint Joseph Parish for five years, 1912 to 1917.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Joseph Church, Marysville

NAMED FOUNDING PASTOR OF ORLAND

After eight years as an assistant pastor, Father Coen was appointed the founding pastor of Saint Dominic Parish, Orland, in 1917. Starting a new parish is a major undertaking. It takes a few years to gather together a community of faith and then begins the struggle to raise enough money to construct the first building where the parish community can gather for worship. The year of the founding of Saint Dominic Parish, as stated in the diocesan directory, is 1919. That means it took Father Coen a couple years to gather the community, raise money for building, and organize the community so the parish could begin and move forward.

It is now 102 years since the founding of Saint Dominic Parish in Orland. The community has had good years and difficult ones, but through it all, the parish continues to move forward. Father Coen planted the seed, and over the past century, others have watered and nourished it, enabling this community to develop and grow.

Father Coen served as the founding pastor of Saint Dominic Parish from 1917 to 1929, the first twelve years of the parish's life. After a century, the parish is still going strong under the direction and pastoral leadership of another young priest born, not in Ireland, but in a different Catholic

country, the Philippines. The Catholic communities of Orland and Hamilton City are now blessed to have Father Antonio B Racela, III, just as the first community was blessed to have Father William Coen as the founding pastor.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Dominic Parish, Orland

FINAL PASTORATE, RED BLUFF

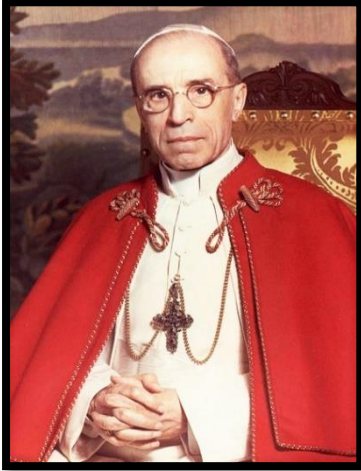
After twelve years as pastor in Orland, the newly arrived Bishop Robert J Armstrong, succeeding Bishop Patrick J Keane who died on September 1, 1928, appointed Father Coen pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff in 1929.

Sacred Heart Parish, located in Tehama County, was established as a parish in 1867 by Bishop Eugene O'Connell of the Vicariate of Marysville. But before Sacred Heart Church was part of the Vicariate of Marysville, all of Northern California and Nevada were in the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and its bishop, Archbishop Joseph Alemany.

The first priest to serve the Red Bluff area was Father Martin Schwenninger who was pastor from 1853 to 1855. Since its beginning in 1853, Sacred Heart Parish has had about

25 pastors in its history with Father Coen being the 16th pastor in its long history. He was pastor of the Red Bluff parish for 34 years, 1929 to 1963.

FATHER COEN NAMED A MONSIGNOR



Pope Pius XII

Pope Pius XII honored Father William Coen by naming him a Domestic Prelate on May 13, 1948. Bishop Robert Armstrong installed Monsignor Coen as a monsignor on September 16, 1948.

THE APOSTOLIC BRIEF OF APPOINTMENT

The following is a translation of the Apostolic Brief, written in Latin, received from His Holiness, Pope Pius the Twelfth, appointing Father William Coen a member of the Papal Household and conferring on him the title of Right Reverend Monsignor:

Secretariate of State of the Holy See
Vatican City
Pius the Twelfth, Pope

To our dear son, William Coen, Pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Red Bluff, California, health and Apostolic Benediction.

Our venerable brother, His Excellency, The Most Reverend Robert John Armstrong, Bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento, informs Us that you, William Coen, have spent forty years in the Priesthood, and in the continuous service of the Diocese of Sacramento, California; that you have given of yourself faithfully and well, all these years to the service of God and his Church; and that you have been, for almost twenty years, Pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that you have been appointed Dean of the Red Bluff Deanery; and so beloved brother, We judge you worthy of special ecclesiastical distinction.

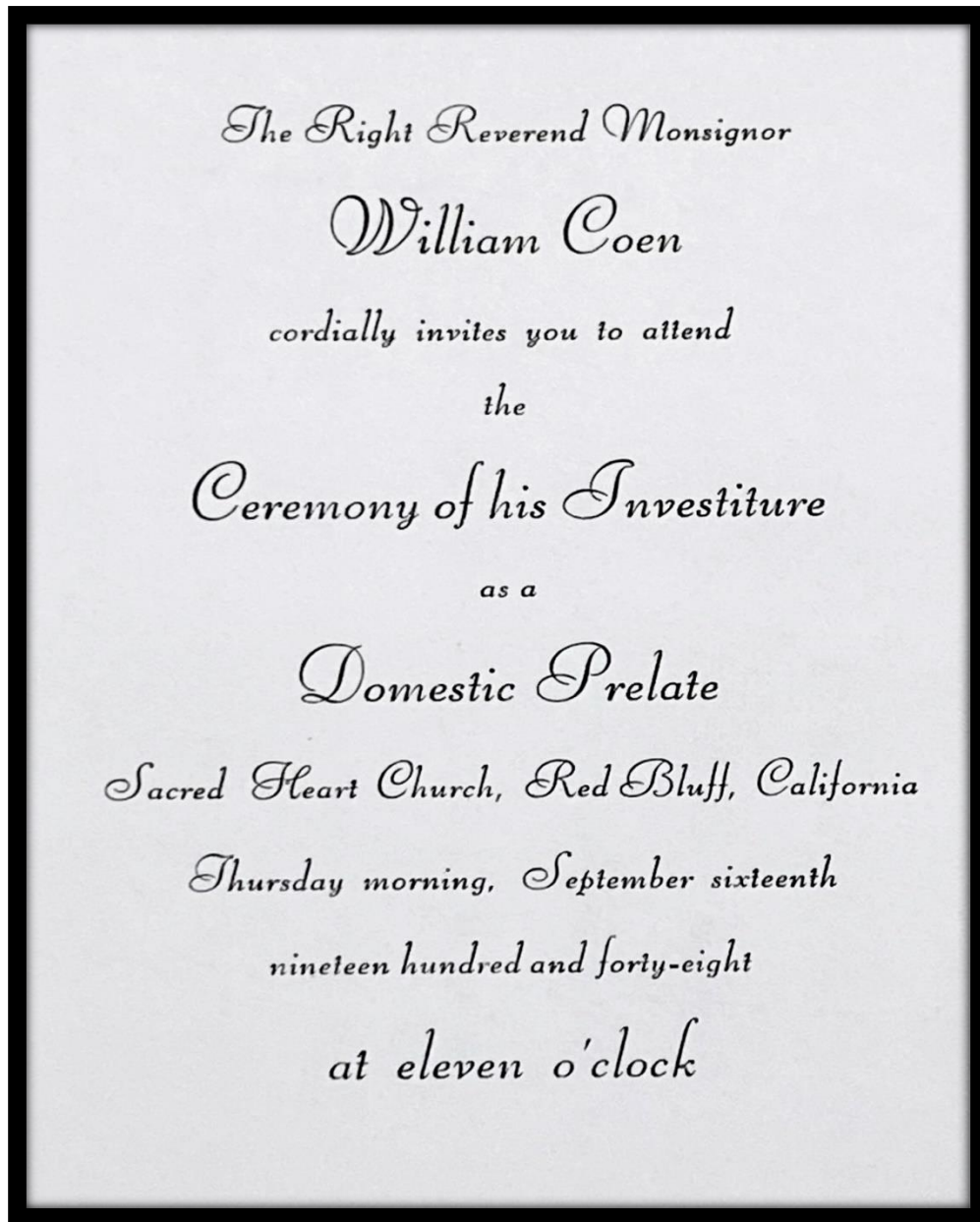
The wishes of our brother, your venerable Bishop, have been received by Us with great favor and We, in order that you may be rewarded with fitting honor, and in order, too, that We may give public testimony of our good will, by these Apostolic letters and by our own authority, do hereby choose, create, appoint and declare you a Priest of the City of Rome, and hereby confer upon you, William Coen, the honor of a Prelate of our own Household, together with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor.

Moreover, dear son, we grant to you the privilege of wearing the purple Cassock, the Rochet and Mantelletum; likewise, We extend to you the use and enjoyment of all the honors, privileges and prerogatives which all Domestic Prelates of your rank possess and enjoy.

Given at Saint Peter's, in the City of Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman's Ring, this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord, Nineteen-hundred and forty-eight, the ninth year of our Pontificate.

Signed: *Pius the Twelfth, Pope*

John Baptist Montini, Assistant Secretary of State



The invitation to attend Monsignor Coen's Installation as a Domestic Prelate

BUILDING PROJECTS DURING MONSIGNOR COEN'S PASTORATE IN RED BLUFF

During Monsignor Coen's 34 year pastorate in Red Bluff, a new sisters' convent was built, a new wing was added to Saint Elizabeth Hospital and a new Mercy High School opened its doors to students from Redding, Red Bluff and Chico. The Sisters of Mercy of the Union staffed both the high school and the hospital.

Monsignor Coen was also appointed Dean of the Red Bluff Deanery as well as a Pro-Synodal Examiner and Parish Priest Consultor to the Bishop by Bishop Robert J Armstrong. Monsignor Coen served in these roles of leadership until his death in 1963.



Photo from Mercy High School Website

Mercy High School, Red Bluff

MONSIGNOR COEN CELEBRATES HIS 50th ANNIVERSARY AS A PRIEST

On May 28, 1959 at the age of 76, Monsignor Coen celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination. Bishop Joseph McGucken who succeeded Bishop Armstrong on his death on January 14, 1957 as Bishop of Sacramento, presided *Coram Pontifice*, at the Mass of Thanksgiving

Monsignor Coen continued to serve as pastor of Red Bluff for three more years until his death on April 8, 1963, at the age of 79 years, 5 months and 6 days.

1909

1959

*The Right Reverend
Monsignor William Coen
will offer a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving
on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his
Ordination to the Priesthood
on Thursday, the twenty-eighth of May
at eleven o'clock
Sacred Heart Church, Red Bluff, California
The Most Reverend Joseph T. McGucken
D. D., S. T. D., L. L. D.
Bishop of Sacramento, presiding
The honour of your presence
is cordially requested*

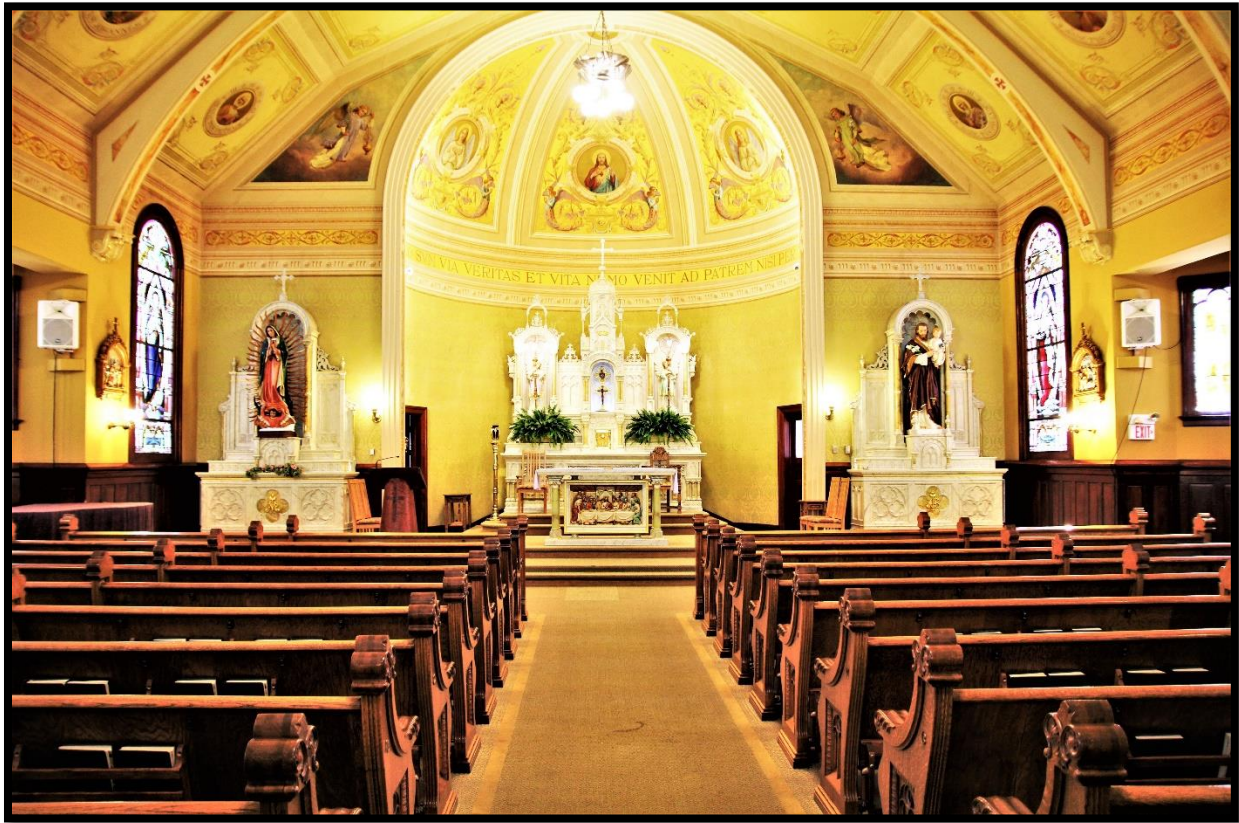


Photo by John E Boll

Sacred Heart Church, Red Bluff

DEATH COMES TO MONSIGNOR COEN

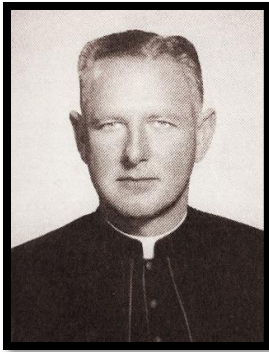
On Monday morning, April 8, 1963, Monsignor William Coen died in Red Bluff after serving the Diocese of Sacramento for 54 years and as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff for 34 years.

FUNERAL MASS FOR MONSIGNOR COEN

On Tuesday, April, 9, a Requiem Mass was held for Monsignor Coen in Sacred Heart Church for the children of the parish school and parishioners of the parish.

On Wednesday, April, 10, the Office of the Dead was prayed by the priests of the diocese at 10:30 AM followed by the Requiem Mass at 11 AM. Bishop Alden J Bell, Bishop of the Diocese of Sacramento, presided *Coram Pontifice* at the Requiem Mass and the Priests' Choir chanted the various parts of the Requiem Mass.

The celebrant of the Mass was Father John O'Connor, pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Redding. Father Michael Fitzgerald, pastor of Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Oroville, served as the deacon and Father James O'Dea, assistant pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Red Bluff, served as the sub-deacon. Father Joseph Vereker, assistant pastor at the Red Bluff Parish, was the master of ceremonies.



Monsignor James D Poole

The homilist at the Funeral Mass was Monsignor James Dallas Poole who served as an assistant of Monsignor Coen in Red Bluff for seven years, 1944 to 1951, prior to his appointment as Diocesan Super-intendent of Catholic Schools.

At the conclusion of the Funeral Mass, the body of Monsignor Coen was taken in procession to the priests' plot of Saint Mary Cemetery in Red Bluff for the Rite of Committal followed by burial.



Photo by Fr Chuck Kelly

Headstone of Monsignor Coen, Saint Mary Cemetery, Red Bluff, CA

MONSIGNOR COEN'S SURVIVING FAMILY

Monsignor Coen was survived by his sister, Mrs. M Donnellan, resident of Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, and his brother Mark Coen, resident of Milltown, County Galway, Ireland.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Monsignor William Coen was born in the eighth decade of the nineteenth century and was ordained a priest at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. The world he was born into was totally different from our world of the twenty-first century. Adapting to the American culture, language and customs must have been very challenging for him.

Over the years of a half century of ministry, Father Coen learned how to be an effective priest on the West Coast of the United States. After 39 years as a priest of the Diocese of Sacramento, Pope Pius XII recognized his pastoral leadership by naming him a Domestic Prelate of the Pope's own household in Vatican City.

Monsignor Coen spent nearly half his life ministering to the people of Red Bluff as their pastor. When it came time for him to leave this world behind and return home to God, he was buried with his parishioners in Saint Mary Cemetery in Red Bluff to await the day of the glorious resurrection with them.

We who live in the twenty-first century can learn a great deal from all the priests who lived in that previous era and gave their lives in service to the Church of Sacramento. We are grateful to Monsignor Coen and all the priests and the religious brothers and sisters who gave their lives in service to the People of God in this expansive diocese of Sacramento.



*Lord, God of heaven and earth,
You called William Coen to the priesthood
And sent him on mission to the people
Of Northern California.
For fifty-four years he faithfully served
Your people throughout the Diocese of Sacramento.
Now, you have called him home to be with you in
your Kingdom of Light, Joy and Peace. We thank
you for his faithful ministry to the
Church of Sacramento.*