

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

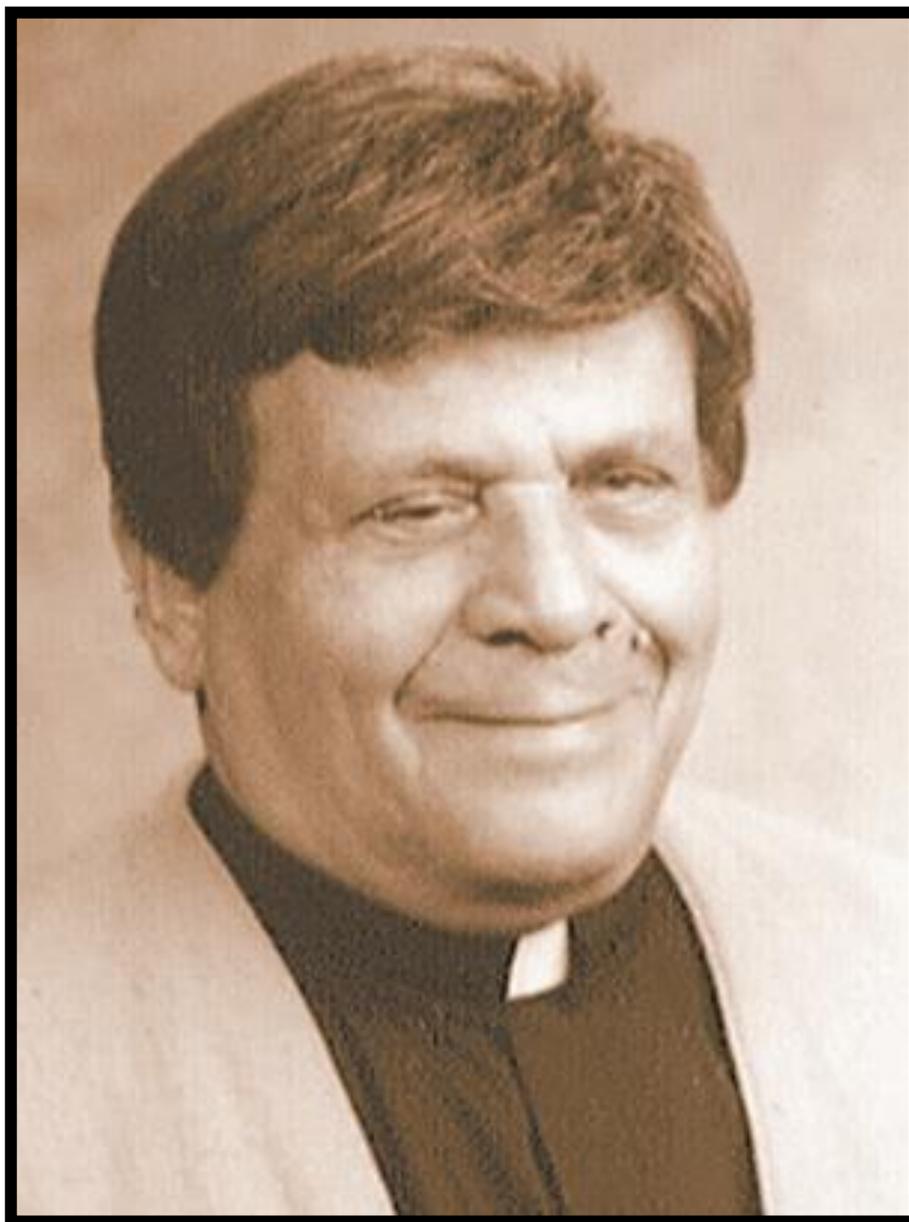
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FATHER THOMAS BATCH **Pastor Emeritus of Saint Paul Parish, Knights Landing**

Interview by Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist, 2013



Father Thomas Batch

Thomas Batch was born on April 7, 1923 at Monongahela, Pennsylvania, the last of four children born to Harry Batch and Ethyl Hilton.

Tom grew up in Pittsburgh, PA. After his parents separated and divorced, Tom's mother suffered from health issues and she was not able to care for her children at that point. The children were placed in an orphanage in Pittsburgh except for son Joseph. Tom continued to live in the orphanage until he was 12 years of age and then was reunited with his mother. He says she was wonderful.

After the death of his mother, Tom's father Harry remarried and he and his wife had two daughters, Harriett Melchioris of Oklahoma and Jean Demmer of Southern California.

Tom Becomes a Catholic

One of the boys in the orphanage found a copy of the Baltimore Catechism and gave it to Tom because he thought he would be interested in it. Tom says he was interested in Catholicism from his childhood days. He read the book and was thoroughly impressed by it. By the age of 8 or 10, Tom says he knew the Bible well. This sparked his interest in becoming a Catholic someday.

Tom attended public school in Pittsburgh but in high school transferred to Central Catholic high school. It was during his years at Central Catholic High that Tom became a Catholic. After graduation he worked for a time in the steel mills of Pennsylvania.

As Tom grew in age he developed his music skills and became an excellent pianist as well as a good singer. In his younger years he was a pianist-singer at nightclubs for a while. He served as organist and music director for Saint Paul Church in Cleveland.

In the late 1960s Tom moved to Southern California and lived there for ten years. He began working in education and became principal of a Lutheran elementary school in Southern California.

Ordination in the Old Catholic Church Community

Tom had read about the Old Catholic Church and decided to make contact with a bishop of that church. After their initial meeting, the Old Catholic bishop began a course of studies with Tom. It became apparent to the bishop that because Tom had read and studied so much on his own, he was ready to be ordained. Tom was ordained a priest in the Old Catholic Church in the late 1970s.

Tom moved to Northern California in the early 1980s and became good friends with Monsignor Vito Mistretta, pastor of Holy Family Church in Citrus Heights. He went on a pilgrimage to Europe with Monsignor Mistretta. Tom made contact with the Vocation Office of the Diocese of Sacramento to inquire about the possibility of becoming a priest for Sacramento.

The Diocese of Sacramento contacted the Vatican about Tom's request to enter into communion with the Roman Catholic Church and to be accepted for studies for priesthood in

the Roman Catholic Church. Permission was granted to Tom by the Vatican to return to full communion with Catholic Church and to begin his studies for the priesthood. Bishop Quinn sent Tom to Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park in 1981. Since he had been ordained a priest in the Old Catholic Church, he was put on the fast track and completed his studies at Saint Patrick Seminary in two years.

Father Batch Ordained a Roman Catholic Priest in 1984

Thomas Batch was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento by Bishop Francis A Quinn in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on March 17, 1984. His first assignment was to serve as parochial vicar at Saint Isidore Parish in Yuba City with Father Joseph Bishop from 1984 to 1990.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

Saint Isidore Church, Yuba City where Father Batch Served

His second assignment was a year's appointment as Catholic chaplain to the Methodist and Kaiser Hospitals in South Sacramento with residence at Saint Elizabeth Parish in Sacramento. He was then appointed pastor of Saint Paul Parish in Knight's Landing where he ministered until he retired in 2001 at the age of 77.

Father Batch feels positive about his various ministries in the Diocese of Sacramento. After his retirement, he moved to his own home in Yuba City. As his health declined and he became legally blind, he moved to River Valley Convalescent Hospital in Live Oak.

He said he would like to return to his home in Yuba City but given his inability to take care of himself, he was forced to remain in the care facility.

Two Highlights of his Life

There are two important highlights in Father Tom's priestly life. In 1986 he concelebrated Mass at the Papal Chapel in the Vatican with Pope John Paul II and Bishop Francis Quinn. The second highlight was meeting Mother Teresa of Calcutta in Rome during the same trip. He remembers taking a package to Mother Teresa from her sisters in New York. Even now when he needs help he reminds Blessed Mother Teresa of the time he helped her in 1986.

Father Batch is now in his early 90s. His health is not strong but he continues on each day with faith and trust in God who will bring all things to completion.

We thank Father Batch for his years of service to the Church of Sacramento and wish him God's blessing as he continues his journey of faith.

AD MULTOS ANNOS!



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Painting of Father Batch with Mother Teresa

Post Script – Father Batch’s Death

Father Thomas Batch fulfilled his dream by returning to his home in Yuba City with the help of a caregiver. He died at home on Monday evening, August 24, 2015, at the age of 92.

A Vigil was held for him on Wednesday, September 2, 2015, in Saint Isidore Church in Yuba City and the following day, Auxiliary Bishop Myron Cotta presided at the concelebrated Funeral Mass of Christian Burial for Father Batch in Saint Isidore Church. His body was laid to rest in Sutter Cemetery.

Father Tom had a long journey of 92 years. On that journey he became a Catholic during high school, worked for a short time in the steel industry, was a pianist and singer, became a teacher and principal, was ordained a priest in the Old Catholic Church, returned to the Roman Catholic Church, was ordained a priest in the Catholic Church, served in the Diocese of Sacramento for 15 years as parochial vicar in Yuba City and as pastor of Knights Landing. He was retired for 15 years when his earthly journey ended. Now he begins eternal life in God’s presence.

***May Father Tom be at peace and fully alive in the Lord!
May the angels and saints come to meet him and welcome him
into the glorious presence of God.***

***May his soul and the souls of all the faith departed
Through the mercy of God rest in peace.***

