



+ BISHOP ALPHONSE NAPOLEÓN GALLEGOS, O.A.R

Order of Augustinian Recollects 1958 - 1981

Auxiliary Bishop of Sacramento 1981 - 1991

1931 – 1991

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 1

Fr John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

No 11

July 2012

Alphonse Gallegos and his twin brother Eloy were born on February 20, 1931 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Their father, José Angel Gallegos, was a carpenter and their mother, Caciaa Apodaca, a homemaker cared for their 11 children of five sons and six daughters: Sally, Leonard, Ralph, Sena, Arlene, Vangie, Rita, Eloy and Alphonse, twins, Lena and Raymond. The Gallegos children were fourth generation Mexican American. The family moved to Los Angeles and lived in the Watts area where many Hispanic families lived. Alphonse attended public schools in Los Angeles and received the sacrament of confirmation from the hand of then auxiliary bishop Timothy Manning.

ENTERS AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS

In 1950, Alphonse entered the Augustinian Recollect Monastery and attended Rockhurst University, Kansas City, Missouri; St Thomas College, Sparkill, New York; St John University, New York; and Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. He finished his studies for the priesthood at Tagaste Monastery in Suffern, New York. While a seminarian at Tagaste Monastery, his superiors learned that Alphonse was born with a severe myopic eye condition. He had undergone a number of eye surgeries before entering the seminary but had to wear thick glasses in order to see since he was nearly blind.

ORDAINED A PRIEST

In spite of his serious eye condition, he was ordained a priest on May 24, 1958 and at first worked in ministries related to his order as prefect of professed students and assistant prior. He also pursued advanced studies and received Masters of Art degrees in psychology, education and religious studies as well as a Master of Education degree in inner city education.

Despite the debilitating eye condition which caused him to lose one of his eyes, he plunged into ministry among the Hispanic community of Los Angeles, serving as pastor of San Miguel and Cristo Rey parishes. He was also an advisor to Los Angeles Cardinal Timothy Manning on Hispanic affairs. He helped set up a training program for the Hispanic permanent diaconate of the archdiocese. Father Alphonse was fearless in walking the streets of Los Angeles in his attempt to reconcile opposing gangs.

DIRECTOR OF HISPANIC AFFAIRS IN THE CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

In 1979 he was appointed the first director of Hispanic Affairs of the California Catholic Conference of Bishops. This meant a move for him to Sacramento. He took up residence at St Rose Parish on Franklin Boulevard and after two years working in Hispanic Affairs at the conference, Pope John Paul II appointed Father Gallegos Titular Bishop of Sasabe and auxiliary bishop of Sacramento. He was ordained a bishop on November 4, 1981 in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament by Bishop Francis Quinn and co-consecrators Archbishop John R Quinn of San Francisco and Archbishop Robert F Sanchez of Albuquerque. His ordination as bishop was a

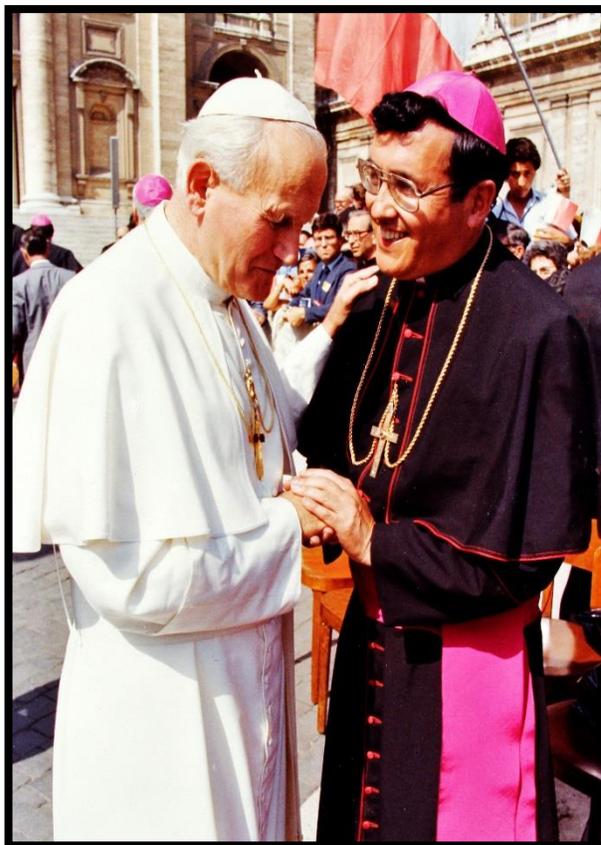
cause of great enthusiasm among the Hispanic community because it was a sign that Hispanics had finally arrived at a position of leadership in both the church and society.

Bishop Gallegos threw himself into his new ministry as bishop. After a year getting to know the diocese, Bishop Quinn appointed Bishop Gallegos pastor of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1983. He also served as vicar general of the diocese and director of the Hispanic Apostolate. Since his ministry as auxiliary bishop often demanded that he be away from his parish, Fr Paul Fierro, SDS tended to the day-to-day affairs of the busy parish.

A FRIEND OF THE LOW-RIDERS

Bishop Gallegos made a special effort to reach out to the low-riders, a popular automobile group among Hispanic youth. As he had done in Los Angeles, he walked the streets of Sacramento trying to avert gang warfare which now included drive-by shootings in Sacramento. Bishop Alphonse was a strong supporter of pro-life causes and often spoke of the need for Catholics to be consistently for life in all its forms.

As time passed, Bishop Gallegos grew frustrated that he had not been given a diocese. According to historian Father Steve Avella, "In 1985, Bishop Gallegos made a full-court press to be posted in his own diocese, and Bishop Quinn recommended him to Apostolic Delegate Pio Laghi. However, troubles with his eyes, some discontent among Hispanic clergy with his leadership, and a lack of attention to detail may have precluded his appointment."



Bishop Gallegos Talks with Pope John Paul II

BISHOP GALLEGOS KILLED IN A CAR ACCIDENT

I remember the night before his untimely death when he addressed the deacons and their wives at the annual deacon dinner at Saint Rose Parish in Roseville. He spoke with great emotion about the need for Catholics to speak up for life in all its forms. That would be his final farewell message because the next night, Sunday, October 6, 1991, the chauffeur driven car he was riding in suddenly lost all power as it neared Yuba City on Highway 99. The bishop was on his way home from a confirmation that day at Sacred Heart Parish in Gridley. As Bishop Gallegos got out of the car to push the vehicle off the road, a young woman driving the same road came over the hill and did not see the stalled car ahead of her. She crashed into the car, striking Bishop Gallegos and hurling his body a hundred feet, killing him instantly. His sudden

and tragic death sent a shock-wave throughout the diocese, across California and the whole nation, causing great grief among Hispanic Catholics who knew and loved him.

FUNERAL MASS CELEBRATED IN THE SACRAMENTO CATHEDRAL

The Funeral Mass for Bishop Gallegos brought together thousands of people to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. Bishops from across the United States came for the funeral of their brother bishop and friend. Bishop Francis Quinn presided at the Funeral Mass and Cardinal Roger Mahoney gave the homily in both English and Spanish. Hispanic low-riders of Sacramento formed an honor guard on the way to St Mary Cemetery and the funeral procession was one of the longest in Sacramento history.

MEMORY OF BISHOP GALLEGOS HONORED

A few years after Bishop Gallegos' death, a group of admirers gathered public support and funds to erect a monument to Bishop Gallegos on Eleventh Street between K and L Streets. Sacramento city officials named that section of Eleventh Street *Gallegos Square* in honor of the bishop. A statue of Bishop Gallegos designed by John Houser was unveiled and blessed in February 1997 at *Gallegos Square* which is next to the Cathedral in downtown Sacramento.

AUGUSTINIANS SEEK BEATIFICATION OF BISHOP GALLEGOS

At the 2004 general chapter of the Augustinian Recollects, the Augustinian community advanced a plan to begin the process of beatification and canonization of Bishop Gallegos. His cause for beatification was opened at a special liturgy at the Cathedral in January 2006. His tomb was opened and his body examined as the Vatican process for canonization demands, and after a Pontifical Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral with his casket present, his body was taken to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 7th and T Streets where it was entombed in a vault in a small side chapel of the church where he had been pastor. His tomb is now easily accessible to people so they can come to ask for his intercession. If a miracle happens and can be shown to have occurred through Bishop Gallegos' intercession, he could be raised to the rank of *Blessed*.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

The Body of Bishop Gallegos moved to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in 2006

Bishop Gallegos' significance to the diocese was summed up well in an editorial of the *Catholic Herald* in these words: *“Ministry to Hispanics was already one of the diocese's priorities when he was named auxiliary bishop. Yet he was able to bring to Hispanic ministry in the diocese something it did not have before. He embodied a sense of identity, provided a rallying point, became a symbol, almost a sacramental sign of both the possibility and the need for a church that was one body, though many members.”*

Although Bishop Gallegos was auxiliary bishop for ten years and died at the age of 60, he left a grand legacy of faith and service to the People of God of the Church of Sacramento. He challenged all of us to be who we are, the Body of Christ and the living stones of the Temple of God.

POPE FRANCIS PROCLAIMS BISHOP GALLEGOS VENERABLE

After an extensive investigation into the life of Bishop Gallegos, the Vatican Congregation for Saints recommended to Pope Francis that Bishop Gallegos be raised to the rank of “Venerable” in the Catholic Church.

On Saturday, November 19, 2016, the Catholic community of Sacramento and the Augustinian Recollects gathered at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento for the official proclamation that Bishop Alphonse Gallegos has been found worthy to be raised to the rank of “Venerable” in the Catholic Church.



Photo by Cathy Joyce, *Catholic Herald*

Bishop Soto greets Bishop Emeritus Francis Quinn as the Ceremony Begins

CELEBATION BEGINS AT GALLEGOS SQUARE NEAR THE CATHEDRAL

The gathering began in front of the statue of Bishop Gallegos at Gallegos Square near the Cathedral followed by a procession into the church. Bishop Myron Cotta, auxiliary bishop of Sacramento, read the Vatican declaration raising Bishop Gallegos to rank of Venerable. Bishop Jaime Soto, joined by fellow bishops and priests from near and far, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Venerable Alphonse Gallegos.



Photo by Cathy Joyce, *Catholic Herald*

Members of the Augustinian Recollects Address Bishop Soto



Bishop Myron Cotta reads the Papal Declaration of the Holy Life of Venerable Gallegos



Photo by Cathy Joyce, *Catholic Herald*

**Bishop Soto Receives a copy of the Vatican Investigations
Of the Life of Venerable Alphonse Gallegos**

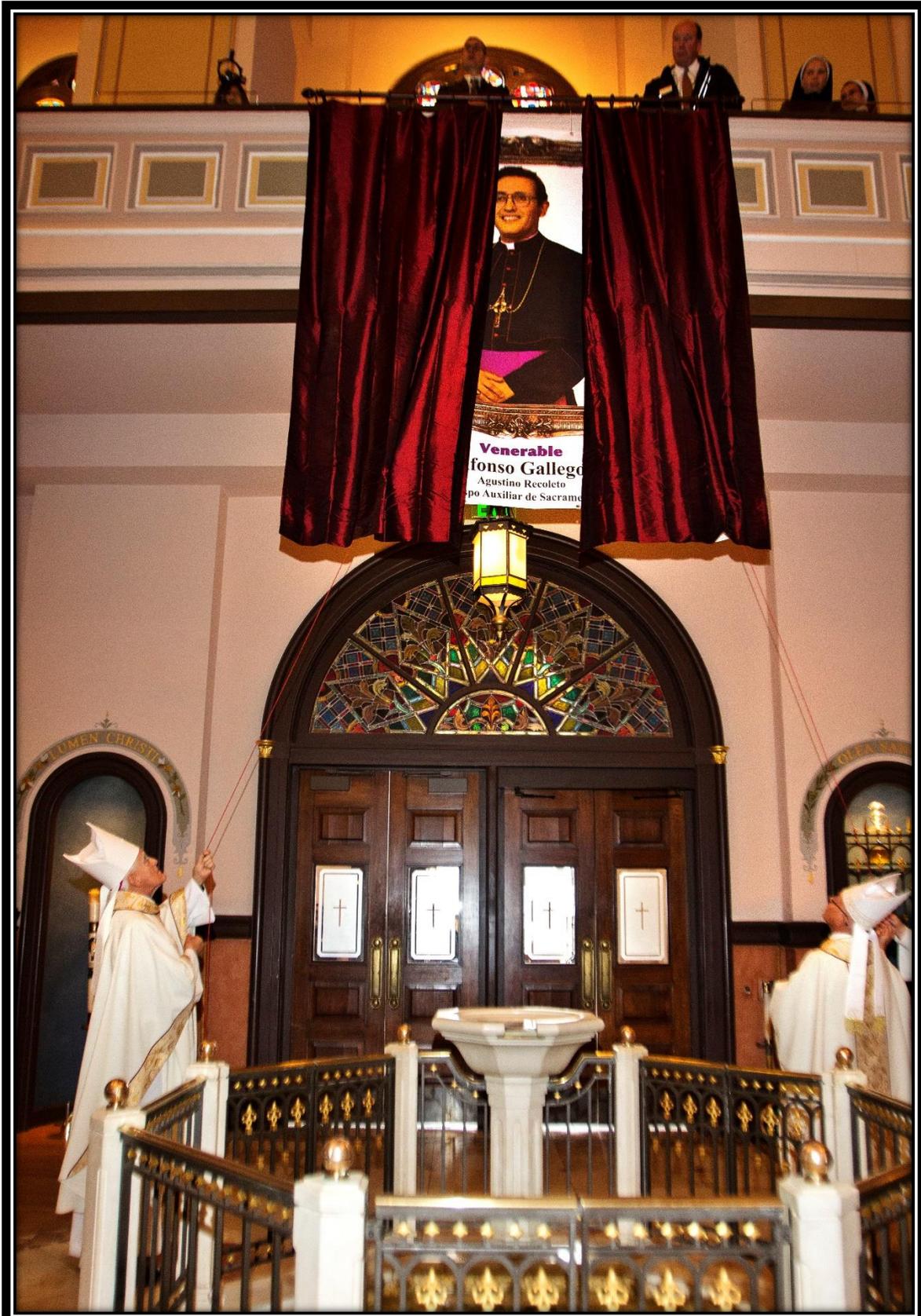
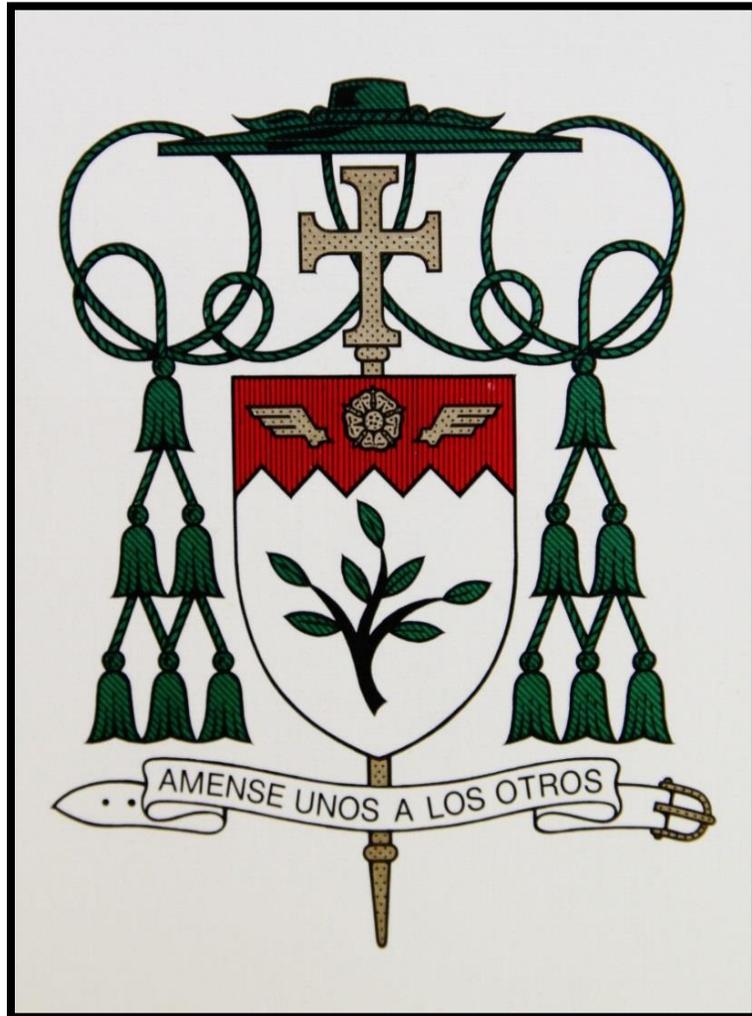


Photo by Cathy Joyce, *Catholic Herald*

Bishops Unveil the Picture of Venerable Alphonse Gallegos during the Mass

*May Venerable Bishop Alphonse intercede before God for the
Church of Sacramento which he loved and served!*



From the Diocesan Archives

Bishop Alphonse Napoleón Gallegos' Coat of Arms

"Love One Another"