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FATHER DOMINIC MONTEVERDE

Apostle of Nevada

By Father John Dwyer, printed May 27 1976 in the *Catholic Herald*

How three Italian seminarians ended up in the Irish Missionary College of All Hallows in Dublin may never be known. What is known is that one of them was destined for the Vicariate of Marysville while the other two were destined for San Francisco.

Dominic Monteverde, a native of Genoa, was born on Christmas Eve in 1837. Twenty-six years later he sailed for America in November 1863. When he arrived in San Francisco he was only a subdeacon. On February 1, 1864, Bishop Pedro Losa, the exiled Bishop of Sonora, Mexico, ordained the young Italian a deacon, and two weeks later Archbishop Alemany ordained him a priest on February 15, 1864 in Old St Mary Cathedral for the Marysville Vicariate.

Following his usual custom, Bishop O'Connell assigned the young priest to the Marysville Cathedral where he served out the remainder of the year. Early in 1865, in response to a request from Father Manogue of Virginia City for help, Father Monteverde was sent as an assistant to St Mary in the Mountains. It was while here that he developed the pattern of his future life.

It seems that whenever Father Monteverde heard that there was a settlement of Catholics anywhere in the State of Nevada, he immediately set out to attend to their needs and where their number warranted it, he would write to Bishop O'Connell for permission to establish a parish and build a church in that community. Thus in the course of his many years of service in Nevada it was he who established four parishes and built six churches.

It was because of a letter from Father Monteverde that Bishop O'Connell established the parish of Austin in 1865, sending Father Edward Kelly as its first pastor. But when the bishop's attention was directed to Catholics in Salt Lake City, he sent Father Kelly to establish that parish, and Father Monteverde was directed to take over Austin, Nevada. Both priests exchanged places in Austin twice.

But Austin, Nevada, located as it was 180 miles east of Virginia City, was the only parish in eastern Nevada and Father Monteverde tried to serve all camps of the area. In 1869 he called the attention of the bishop to the community of Hamilton, further south, and again Father Monteverde founded that parish, remaining as its pastor for two years, and then going back to Austin again.

In 1873, the parish of Pioche, located in eastern Nevada but far below the line in the San Francisco Archdiocese became vacant when Archbishop Alemany moved Father Lawrence Scanlan to Petaluma. The archbishop had no one to send to this most isolated post in the archdiocese. Bishop O'Connell appointed Father Monteverde as the new pastor.

It was at this time that Bishop O'Connell wrote a very pathetic letter to Rome stating that Father Monteverde was very tired after nine years labor and the building of four churches, and that he was asking for a year off to rest and pray in a religious house, and then seek a new field of labor. Bishop O'Connell, while full of sympathy for the missionary, asked Rome not to grant the request because "the workers are few and the harvest is great." Father Monteverde remained and in 1874 built his fifth church, this time in the town of Belmont, Nevada.



From the Archives of the Reno Diocese

St Mary's in the Mountains Church, Virginia City, Nevada
Built by Father Patrick Manogue and assisted by Father Dominic Monteverde

In 1876 when Bishop O'Connell moved Father James Hynes, the founding pastor of Eureka, Nevada, back to Marysville, it was Father Monteverde who was chosen to succeed him, a post he held for seven years.

Father Monteverde waited until 1883 before he presented his request a second time, this time to his fellow Nevadan, who was now the coadjutor, Bishop Patrick Manogue. Finally the permission was granted.

Father Monteverde went east and eventually became a priest of the Brooklyn diocese. He was appointed pastor of Holy Rosary Church in Brooklyn, a post he held until his death at the age of 61 on January 2, 1898.

Father Monteverde thus goes down in history as the apostle of Nevada, though this title often has been given to Father Manogue of Virginia City because of his 20 years as pastor of St Mary in the Mountains. But it was Dominic Monteverde who covered all the area east of Virginia City in the Missions of Lander, Eureka, White Pine and Lincoln Counties. There was scarcely a Catholic miner or a Catholic family in the scattered towns and outposts of this huge territory who did not at some time or other receive the services of this Italian missionary during the 18 year period from 1865 to 1883.