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Father Fernando Sanchez

A LIFE CUT SHORT BY A TRAGIC ACCIDENT

September 6, 1949 - December 22, 1980

Information for this article came from the obituary of Father Sanchez printed in the
January 8, 1981 issue of *The Catholic Herald*



One hundred twenty-nine priests of the diocese turned out on Friday, December 26, 1980, to honor the life of Father Fernando Sanchez whose life was cut short after only nine months of ordained priestly ministry. Father Sanchez was killed in the early morning of December 22, 1980 when the small subcompact car he was driving veered off the road in dense fog in south Sacramento County not far from Saint Pius X Education Center in the Galt area. His car struck a utility pole and he was killed instantly.

Bishop Francis A Quinn was the principal celebrant of the concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial at 11 AM held at Saint Rose of Lima Church in Roseville where Father Sanchez had been assigned as parochial vicar serving the Spanish-speaking communities of Saint Rose Parish, Roseville and Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln.

Father Sanchez, 31, was one of three young men from Mexico ordained on March 15, 1980 by Bishop Quinn, his first ordination as Bishop of Sacramento.

The homily was given by Father Aurelio Almanza who was working in the Spanish-speaking apostolate at Saint Joseph Parish in Rio Vista and comes from the same town in Mexico as Father Sanchez. He gave a brief biography of Father Sanchez and told of the young priest's dreams and work.

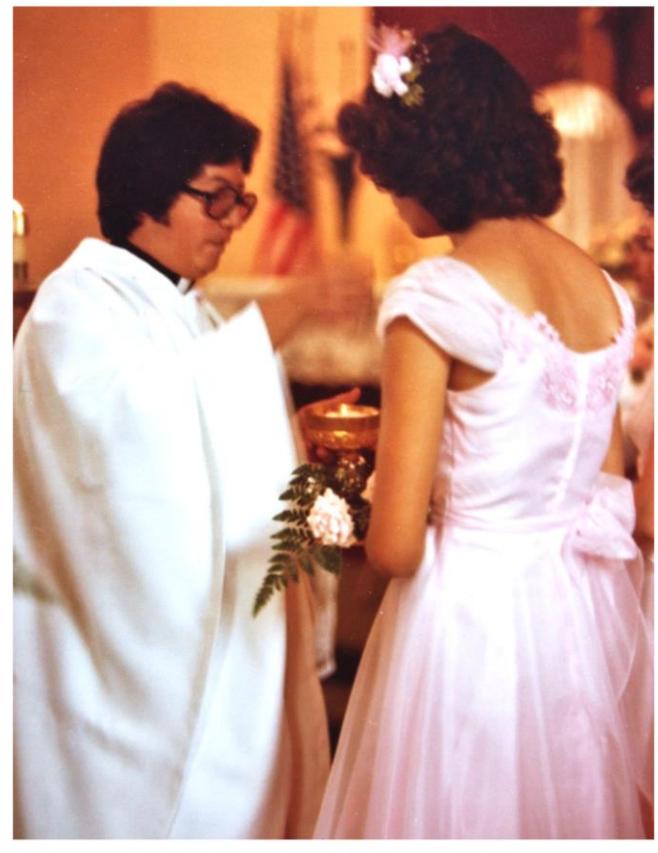


Photo courtesy of Lupe Ruelas, Lincoln

Father Fernando celebrates a Quinceañera in Saint Joseph Church, Lincoln

BISHOP QUINN'S REMARKS

In his remarks to the assembled priests and laity crowding Saint Rose Church, Bishop Quinn noted, "Fernando Sanchez was a young man who left his native land to go a great distance to do Our Lord's work, particularly among his people who had also left their native land. This young priest was a foreign missioner who made all the sacrifices that every foreign missioner makes, leaving family and friends and moving into a strange new culture. These are very strong personal sacrifices, and yet, he was able to make them."

He called Father Sanchez "a very personable young man, outgoing, loving, and caring. He was a zealous and dedicated young priest who traveled to many places in the diocese to celebrate Mass, to instruct and catechize. He traveled much every weekend to take care of the Spanish-speaking people in Lincoln and in Roseville. We in the diocese will feel his loss deeply. Fernando was my son through ordination and I will miss him deeply."

Bishop Quinn also said he was very pleased with the representation of diocesan priests in the assembly. "Priests from every part of the diocese were present," said Monsignor James Corcoran, pastor of Saint Rose parish, with whom Father Sanchez had resided since August 1. "And all of the priests of the Spanish-speaking apostolate were there. The church was filled with people not just from Roseville but also those who knew him from other parishes in the diocese. The choir also came from all over the area."

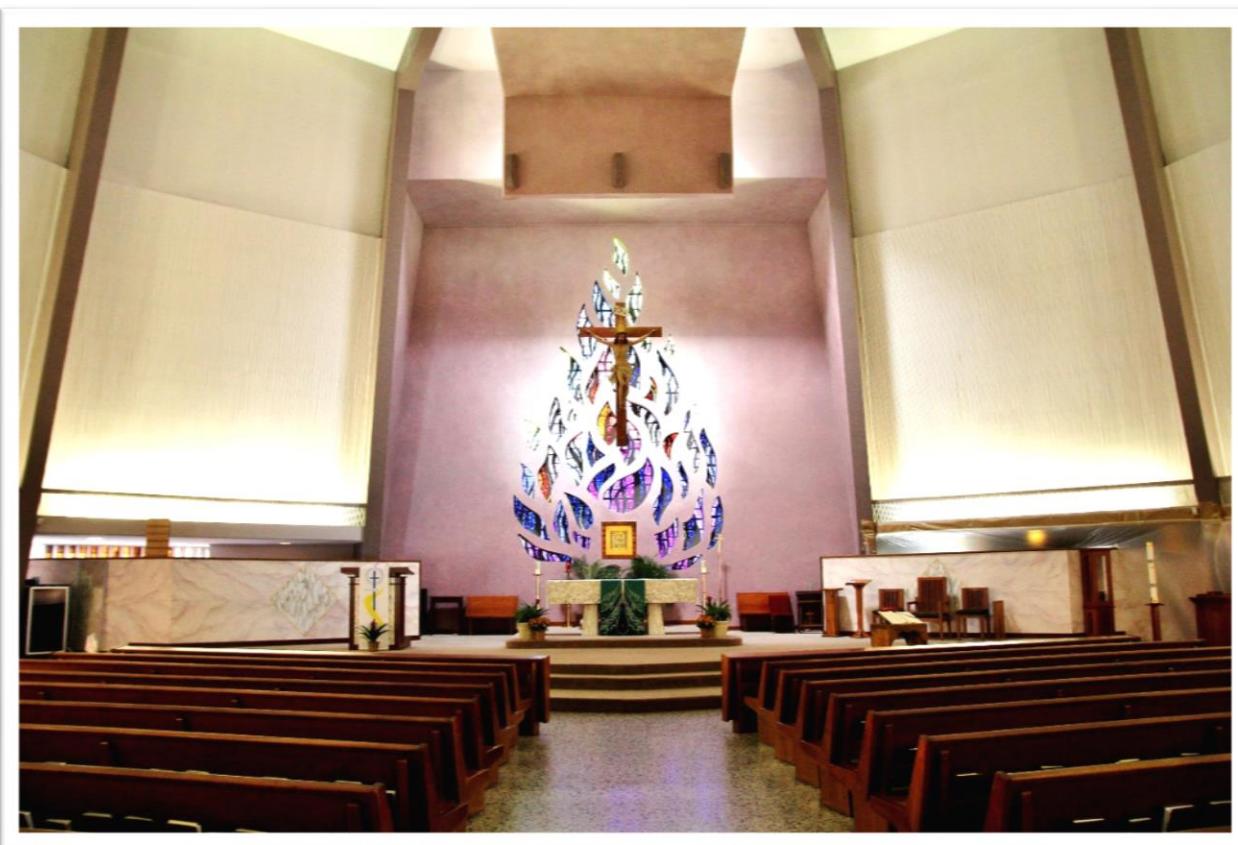


Photo by John E Boll

Saint Rose Church, Roseville

FATHER HALL ACCOMPANIES FR SANCHEZ'S BODY TO MEXICO

Monsignor Corcoran accompanied the body of Father Fernando to San Francisco with Father Sidney Hall, coordinator of the Spanish-speaking apostolate. Father Hall continued on as official representative of the Diocese of Sacramento to Father Sanchez' home town of San Juan Evangelista in the costal state of Veracruz, Mexico, where a second funeral Mass and burial took place on December 29. Father Almanza joined Father Hall on the journey to Mexico as representative of the corps of Mexican priests serving in the Diocese of Sacramento.

"The family of Father Sanchez was very consoled that the diocese returned Father Fernando's body to them, accompanied by Father Hall, coordinator of the Spanish-speaking apostolate," said Frances Martinez, secretary of the Hispanic Apostolate. "He was someone who didn't just have dreams," said Mrs Martinez, "he set out to pursue them. He believed that full participation of the laity was the way to get everyone working together."

Father Sanchez, during his brief ministry in the Sacramento diocese, had become chairman of the Comité Pastoral, a support committee to the Spanish-speaking Apostolate, and a strong advocate of involvement of all diocesan movements, and established a regular Sunday afternoon radio program on KPIP, a 24-hour Spanish language ministry station in Roseville. Mrs Martinez, who had occasion to work with Father Sanchez regularly, testified to the dynamism of his personality and what she called his "vision."



Photo courtesy of Lupe Ruelas, Lincoln

Father Sanchez celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lincoln in 1980

THE FATAL CAR ACCIDENT THAT TOOK FR SANCHEZ'S LIFE

The fatal accident which took Father Sanchez' life was determined by authorities to have occurred at approximately 12:15 AM on December 22, 1980 on Twin Cities Road near Galt. He planned to spend the night in the home of some farmworker friends in the hamlet of Herald and retired about 10:30 PM. When one of the farmworkers awoke around 3 AM, Father Sanchez's bed was found empty.

It was thought that Father Sanchez had decided later to spend the night at Saint Pius X Education Center, about three miles from where he was staying, or to return to Roseville to do something important the next morning.

Father Sanchez was driving a 1979 Chevette in dense fog when the car apparently missed a curve in the road and sheared the left side of the car against a utility pole. The county coroner's office determined in an autopsy that Father Sanchez died of multiple traumatic injuries, including a crushing injury to the chest.

Father Sanchez was the fourth child of Guillermo and Josefa Sanchez of San Juan Evangelista. He is survived by his parents and four brothers and three sisters. Vera Sanchez de Dominguez, Father Fernando's sister, said this about her brother, "As a youngster, Fernando was intelligent, happy and friendly. I know he is with God; for him, death was winning."

*Father Fernando Sanchez was taken from us
Much too soon, just as he was beginning his priestly ministry.
But in his nine months as a priest, he touched the lives of
Many people throughout the Diocese of Sacramento.
In God's eyes, Father Fernando completed his mission.*

*Father Fernando, may you be fully alive in the communion of the
Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Rest now in Peace!