

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

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Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

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## *Father John Vincent Coleman*

Native Son of Roscommon, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

March 30, 1940 – August 23, 1965



*John Vincent Coleman* was born on March 30, 1940 in Roscommon, Ireland, son of Mr and Mrs John Coleman of Roscommon. Vincent had two sisters and a brother who lived in Ireland.

#### **VINCENT'S EDUCATION AND ORDINATION**

Vincent began his education with the Irish Christian Brothers and later attended Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, Ireland. He completed his theological studies at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome and was ordained a priest at the Pontifical Seminary on October 28, 1962 for the Diocese of Sacramento.



Photo from the Irish College Website

#### **Pontifical Irish College, Rome**

The following year, Father Coleman did graduate work at the Lateran University in Rome and received his Licentiate in Sacred Theology and his Bachelor Degree in Canon Law.

#### **ARRIVAL IN SACRAMENTO**

After arriving in Sacramento in October 1963, Father Coleman was assigned as an assistant to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. During the next year he worked with the CYO and a group of Young Christian Workers where his enthusiasm for youth elicited a matching response from them. In addition to his impressive scholastic ability, Father Coleman was noted for his linguistic skills, speaking English, French, Italian and Spanish fluently.

#### **ARDENT CIVIL RIGHTS SUPPORTER**

An ardent supporter of the civil rights movement, Father Vincent worked during the spring and summer of 1964 for the defeat of Proposition 14, the state fair housing measure which ultimately passed in the November election.

### **FATHER COLEMAN'S TRAGIC AND UNTIMELY DEATH**

Because of his brilliant mind, the Diocese of Sacramento sent Father Coleman to the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC to obtain his doctorate degree in Canon Law. During the summer of 1965, he visited his friend Father Joseph Bishop who served at Saint Isidore parish in Yuba City that summer. Both Father Coleman and Father Bishop were students at Catholic University pursuing graduate degrees. They were conferring together about their return to Washington the next month. Father Coleman would complete his doctorate in Canon Law at the end of the academic year and he had been assigned to work in the Diocesan Tribunal that summer.

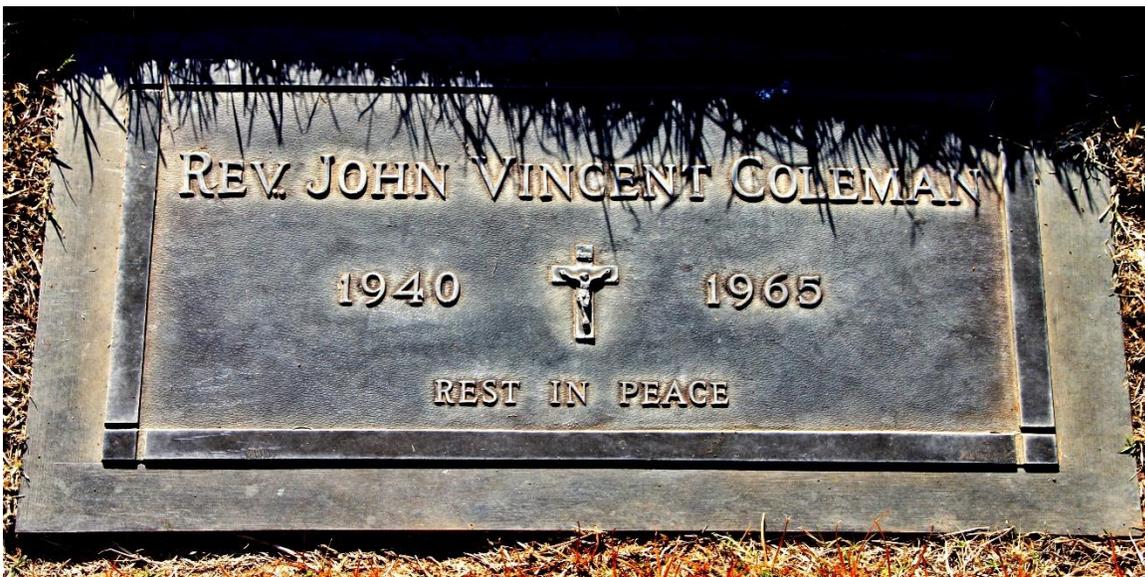
Ordained less than three years, Father Coleman was driving back to Sacramento alone on Monday night, August 23, when he lost control of his car at a turn in the road near the intersection of Highway 99 and the Garden Highway on the outskirts of Yuba City. After the auto rolled over, it hit the edge of a scale station on the side of the highway. Father Vincent Coleman was pronounced dead at the Sutter County Hospital at 11:30 PM that night. He was only 25 years of age.

### **FUNERAL RITES FOR FATHER COLEMAN**

The priests of the diocese gathered on Friday evening at the Cathedral at 8 PM to pray the Office of the Dead. On Saturday morning at 10 AM, a Solemn Requiem Mass was offered for Father Coleman by Monsignor Raymond Renwald, rector of the Cathedral, with Bishop Alden J Bell presiding. The homilist at the Mass was Father Leo McAllister. Chaplains for Bishop Bell were Father Niall Harrington of Sutter Creek and Father Harmon D Skillin of Stockton, a classmate of Father Coleman at Catholic University.

Serving as deacon at the Mass was Father Vincent O'Reilly and Father Joseph Bishop served as sub-deacon. Father Sidney Hall was the master of ceremonies for the funeral liturgy.

### **FATHER COLEMAN LAID TO REST**



After the Funeral Mass at the Cathedral, the body of Father Coleman was taken to Saint Mary Cemetery in Sacramento where it was interred in the Priests' Section, there to await the final resurrection of the dead. W.F. Gormley and Sons Funeral Home handled the funeral arrangements.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Priests' Circle, Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento**

#### **ARCHIVIST'S COMMENT**

The Diocese of Sacramento has suffered a number of tragic deaths of young, vibrant priests of the diocese. There was every hope that Father Vincent Coleman would have a great future ahead of him. He had a brilliant mind and a pleasant personality. But all that changed on August 23, 1965 as Father Vincent headed back to Sacramento, probably driving too fast to handle the curve in the road just ahead.

In the twinkle of an eye, in a matter of a few seconds, the life of Father Vincent was snuffed out as his car tumbled out of control and crashed. Vincent's death was a tragic loss to the Church of Sacramento, to his family in Ireland and to his many friends around the world.

How true it is that we know neither the day nor the hour when we must surrender our lives to the merciful hands of the Lord. We commend Father John Vincent Coleman to the great mercy of the Lord. May he rest now in peace.