

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 3

Father John E Boll

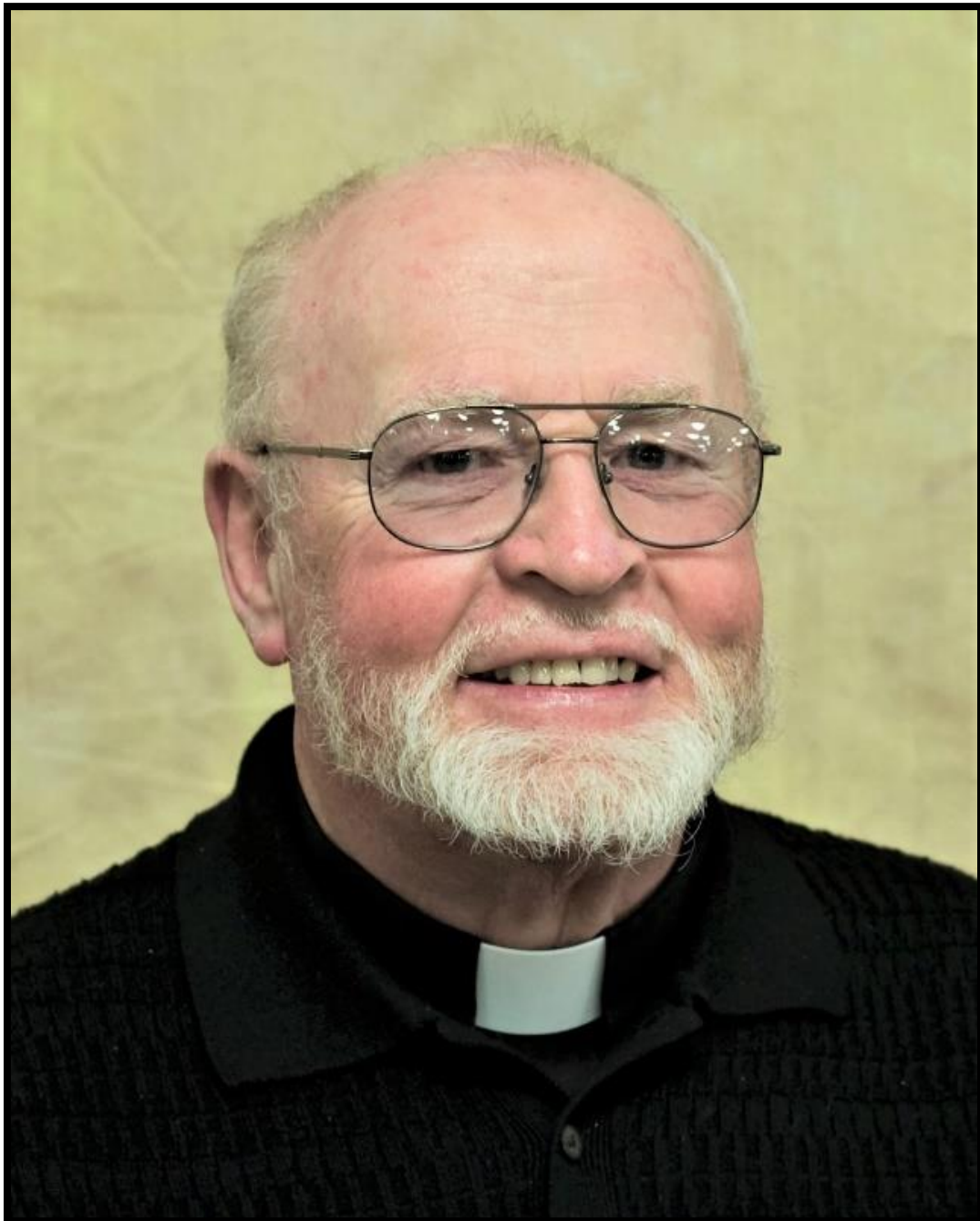
No 23

Father Thomas Maguire

Native of Glenfarne, County Leitrim, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Catholic Chaplain, Folsom State Prison, Folsom, California



Tom Maguire, son of Denis Maguire and Catherine Keaney, was born on August 29, 1943, the fifth child of six born to the Maguire family. The six children, in order of birth, are Hughie Francis, Ann Marie, Patrick Joseph, Margaret Josephine, Thomas and Catherine Agnes.

TOM BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

Tom began his education in Cornamon National School in Glenfarne when he was four years of age. He spent first through fifth grades at the National School from 1947 to 1954, and then transferred to Brockagh National School in Glenfarne for his secondary education from 1954 to 1957. He then transferred to Saint Patrick College, Cavan, for five years, 1957-1963.



Photo courtesy of Fr Tom Maguire

Tom's Class at St Patrick College, Cavan, Ireland

In the fall of 1963, Tom entered All Hallows Seminary, Dublin but spent only one year in this seminary because he had difficulty dealing with the Vincentian approach to seminary training. He left the seminary and went to London where he worked for British Lion Films as a booking agent. At the end of 1964, Tom decided to return to the seminary but changed to Saint John Seminary in Waterford for the next five years.

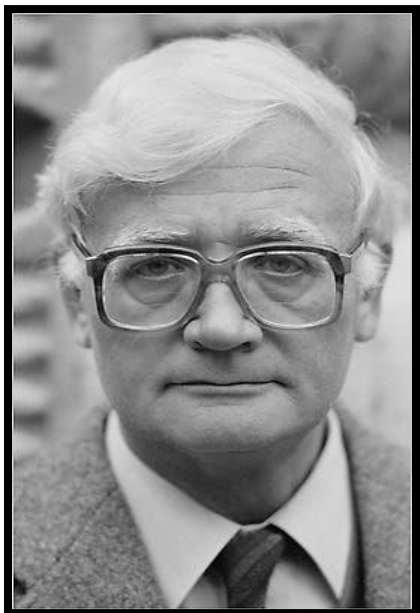
Saint John Seminary was, as were most of the seminaries in Ireland, a missionary seminary preparing men for the English speaking missions of the world. Tom felt he could relate better to the teaching staff at Saint John Seminary since all the priests were diocesan. However, the Second Vatican Council was preparing to end its final session and seminary training was in the process of

change. The seminary teaching staff was divided on how to move forward in light of the Council. The majority of the staff maintained that there was no change for seminary curriculum and spiritual direction while a minority of the staff acted in a more progressive manner, especially the professors of theology.



Photo from the St John Seminary Website

Saint John Seminary, Waterford, Ireland



Father Edward Schillebeeckx, OP

Doctor Thomas Marsh, an excellent priest theologian specializing in sacramental theology and Doctor James Mackey taught the theological view that the Church is a Sacrament of Christ. He followed closely the thought of Father Edward Schillebeeckx, OP and the theologians of Vatican II, relying heavily on the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

As it turned out, Father Marsh left Saint John Seminary and went to Maynooth University and Father Mackey was hired by the University of San Francisco as a professor. From a practical point of view, the conservative thought of the majority of professors at Saint John won the day.

HOW TOM DECIDED ON SACRAMENTO

When Tom was studying in All Hallows, he had decided to serve in the Archdiocese of Las Angeles. When he returned to the seminary in Waterford in the fall of 1964, he reapplied to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles but did not receive a response. Evidently, Cardinal McIntyre was involved in other matters at the time.

After two years in Waterford, in his second year of divinity, Tom was preparing for tonsure and did not have a diocese. The rector of the seminary called Tom to his office to advise him he needed a bishop to accept him for a diocese. The rector suggested that Tom apply to the Diocese of Sacramento. Tom had no idea where Sacramento was but wrote a letter to Bishop Bell in Sacramento to see if he would accept him for the diocese.

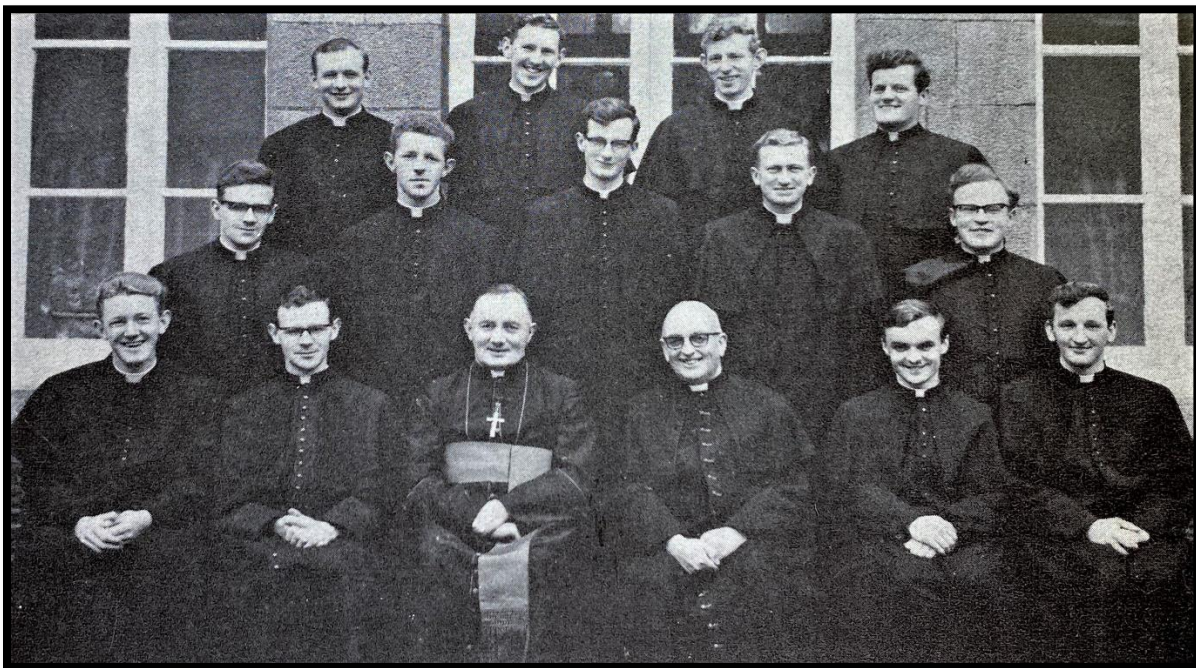
There were several seminarians studying for Sacramento at Saint John Seminary at the time like Michael O'Hara, Liam macCarthy and Mossie O'Brien. Bishop Bell responded to Tom's request right away and the Sacramento diocese accept Tom as a student for the diocese.

TOM'S INTEREST IN DRAMA

One of Tom's interest at this point was drama and acting. He produced several plays by Sean O'Casey and directed the play named *The Playboy of the Western World* by William Synge. The seminary put on two plays a year, one at Halloween and the other on Saint Patrick's Day. Initially, Tom was one of the main actors and then he became the director of the plays.

Tom says that during his time in the seminary, the rooms were very cold because there was no heat in the buildings. Generally, he felt there was good fellowship among the seminarians and he enjoyed his time at Saint John Seminary.

ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD



1969 Ordination Class for Saint John Seminary, Waterford, Ireland

Tom was ordained a priest at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Waterford on June 7, 1969, by Bishop Michael Russell, Diocese of Waterford. In Tom's ordination class, there were 17 students who were ordained together, plus two candidates from a religious community who joined them for ordination.

FATHER MAGUIRE HEADS WEST FOR CALIFORNIA

After his ordination, Father Tom spent a couple months with his family in Glenfarne. He left Ireland in early August on a 747 Boeing from Shannon Airport to New York's JFK Airport. He spent ten days in New York with his sister and then in early September he flew to San Francisco and changed planes for his short flight to Sacramento.

On that flight, there was a tall young man in a Roman collar in the middle seat. Tom was in civilian clothes. Tom said to the priest, "You are a priest." And the priest said, "Yes, I am heading to Sacramento." It was Father Frank Lawlor who was heading to Sacramento to begin his life of ministry. Tom was glad there was another priest on board the plane who knew little to nothing about Sacramento just like himself.

FIRST FEW DAYS IN SACRAMENTO

Father Tom was picked up at the Sacramento Executive Airport in South Sacramento by Father Kevin Clancy. He stayed at Saint Robert Parish with Father Hugh McTague, pastor, for about four days. Then it was vetting day when the Monsignors came to check out these newly arrived priests. Monsignor Tom Kirby, pastor of Saint Basil Parish in Vallejo, chose Father Tom to be his parochial vicar of Saint Basil Parish, Vallejo.

SAINT BASIL PARISH, FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Father Maguire found Saint Basil Parish to be a good place to begin his priestly ministry. The climate was pleasantly cool and the house was friendly with visiting priests passing through. Father John O'Connor was the first assistant and Father Tom was the new priest. He began his ministry at Saint Basil in 1969 and remained there until 1974.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Basil Church, Vallejo

SAINT PHILOMENE PARISH, SECOND ASSIGNMENT

Father Tom's second appointment was Saint Philomene Parish with Monsignor Raymond Renwald, pastor, Father Vincent O'Reilly who was in residence and taught at Loreto High School, and Father Hugh Bannon who was the other assistant. Father Tom found this assignment impossible for him because he just could not engage himself with the parish. He went to Bishop Bell to request a move. Bishop Bell told Tom, "Father, you have not proved yourself yet."



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Philomene Church, Sacramento

Tom returned to the parish and read an article in the National Catholic Reporter about the US bombing in Cambodia. The US Catholic Bishops' Conference had just finished its fall meeting where the bishops discussed the issue of the Viet Nam War. As he read the NCR article about the Bishops' Conference discussion, he thought he would give a homily about the issue at the next Sunday Mass. During his homily, some parishioners who worked at McClellan AFB in North Highlands walked out and called Monsignor Renwald to complain about this young priest.

Father Tom received a call from Bishop Bell directing him to come to his office right away. The next day, Father Tom met with Bishop Bell who talked to Tom about the radical nonsense he was preaching. Father Tom pulled out from his pocket the NCR article about the bishops' discussion of the war. Bishop Bell became even more upset with Tom. Father Maguire was moved from Saint Philomene Church the week after he met with Bishop Bell just as he had hoped.

NEXT PARISH, SAINT JOSEPH, MARYSVILLE

Father Maguire was sent to Saint Joseph Parish in Marysville to work with Father Declan O'Sullivan who was pastor. Father Tom says he enjoyed working in this parish and he and Father Declan got along well together. He loved the Gothic style church and the beautiful stained glass windows from Bavaria.

He came to know the people of the parish well and enjoyed working with the one remaining Notre Dame Sister Judith Flavahaven who was the religious education coordinator. Father Tom served as parochial vicar of the Marysville parish for five years.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Joseph Church, Marysville

SAINT PAUL PARISH, SACRAMENTO

In 1978, Father Tom was given a new assignment to Saint Paul Parish in South Sacramento with Father John Hannan who was pastor. It was a growing parish, mostly blue collar, with lots of families. There was no hospital in the parish so Father Tom had more time for pastoral visitation and projects within the parish. He began a parish program called *Genesis II*, produced by Father Vincent Dwyer. The program had six or eight sessions and proved to be very popular with the parish community. The parish had four different sessions when this program was used.

THE FIRE

Father Tom was a heavy smoker at this time and liked to read in the evenings. One night after reading a long time, he went to bed very sleepy and had not extinguished his cigarette. After he was in bed, the air from the vent in the air conditioner blew his cigarette onto some newspapers and started a fire. Father Tom woke up to find his bedroom filled with smoke and he went to the bedroom window to open it up but there were bars on the window. He struggled to get to the door of his rectory apartment but collapsed from smoke inhalation.

Fire fighters were able to rescue Tom from the flames and he was taken to Mercy Hospital. He did not regain consciousness until he was in the hospital. He was released later that day and returned to the Saint Paul rectory. He moved to an adjoining bedroom since his bedroom was smoke damaged. The fire broke out a second time the next morning and completely burned the roof of the rectory.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Paul Parish Rectory

The story of the fire printed in *The Sacramento Bee* maintained that Father Tom was inebriated and started the fire. However, the main fire which destroyed the rectory roof happened the second day from a smoldering hotspot in the attic. Because of the publicity surrounding the rectory fire, Bishop Quinn decided to send Father Tom for an evaluation for alcoholism at the House of Affirmation in Montara, CA.

The House of Affirmation concluded that Father Tom had an alcohol problem that needed to be treated. Bishop Quinn allowed Tom to choose where he would go for treatment and he chose Saint Luke's Institute in Holliston, Western Massachusetts. This was a life changing point in his life.

A TIME OF LIFE-CHANGING TREATMENT

The treatment facility was co-ed for religious people, mostly clergy and religious sisters. The regiment consisted of intense therapy, both individual and group. Father Tom says, "I am proud to say I tested the skills of several therapists. The main benefits of the residential treatment program was I had nothing else I had to do but deal with my personal struggles; I was suspended from any kind of ministry.

"Despite the stress of being in rehabilitation, there was the novelty of being in a co-ed community that was spiritually based and I became attracted to the common life of work and prayer. At times I felt that I might join a religious community. However, that was not to happen.

"One of the more difficult parts of re-habilitation is re-entry and trying to rebuild a life in the priesthood. After I returned to Sacramento, I was fortunate to live in a house that was very supportive in its own way, Saint Robert's Parish in Sacramento, where I spent my re-entry time. I remained in the parish for two and a half years as a parochial vicar."

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, RIO VISTA

In 1982, Bishop Quinn assigned Father Maguire as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Rio Vista. When he arrived, the parish plant was in very bad condition. People often used their umbrellas during Mass inside the church in wintertime because the roof was leaking. Gathering the money to rehabilitate the parish facilities was a great challenge. Father Tom says he damaged his leadership of the parish when he suggested to the parish community that they consider building a new church on another site the parish already owned.

To abandon the church in Rio Vista was unthinkable for the parishioners. The previous pastor had promised the parishioners that the present church would be restored to its original beauty in 1906. Realizing that a new church was out of the question, Father Tom consulted Barnum and Folsom Architects in Sacramento to see what could be done to renovate the present church. An assessment of the church was done and it was discovered that the foundation of the church was in very bad condition.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Joseph Church, Rio Vista

The church was rehabilitated but the renovation was only partly completed because the towers in the front of the church continued to leak. At least the church was inhabitable once again and Mass was resumed in the church. As soon as the renovation was accomplished and mostly paid for, Father Tom decided it was time for him to move.

MULE CREEK STATE PRISON



Photo by Gettyimages, Justin Sullivan

Overcrowded Mule Creek State Prison

Father Denis Keaney, Catholic chaplain at Folsom Prison, called Father Tom in 1987 to ask him if he would consider being a chaplain at a new prison being built in Solano County. Father Tom said no because he had not paid off the debt on the renovation of the Rio Vista Church.

Within a year, Father Denis called Father Tom again and asked if he would consider going to the new prison in Lone. Father Tom said he would apply. The new prison was in the process of being built when Father Tom was invited for an interview at the prison. The interview went well and he was recommended for the chaplaincy. Bishop Quinn approved and appointed Father Tom as the new Catholic chaplain at Mule Creek. Father Tom had no idea what this ministry would be like.

As it turned out, it was difficult getting started as chaplain at Mule Creek but over the eleven years he served as Catholic chaplain, it turned into a fulfilling and enjoyable experience for him. Some of the infamous prisoners he dealt with during his time in Mule Creek were members of the Manson Family and the Onion Field Killers. For the most part, the prisoners were young drug abusers from the Los Angeles area.

One of the great challenges at Mule Creek was the breakout of AIDS. Everyone was on guard, prisoners and guards. Not much was known about AIDS in the beginning but as scientific research continued on the disease, the whole prison community calmed down.

FOLSOM STATE PRISON



Photo from the Folsom State Prison Website

The Old Folsom State Prison

In late 1998, Father Denis Keaney retired as Catholic chaplain of Folsom Prison and his position became vacant. Father Tom applied for this chaplaincy and was named chaplain of Folsom Prison. He simply transferred from Mule Creek to Folsom Prison.

Father Tom served as Catholic chaplain of the Folsom Prison for ten years and retired from this position in 2005. The Old Prison was a whole new experience for him. This prison is centered around one yard so everyone had access to the chapel at all times. It was a very busy ministry for him and he was in control of the chapel. He did a lot of personal, one-on-one counseling with inmates and visited with prisoners on lock-down. He would bring Catholic newspapers and magazines to prisoners on locked down. This provided him an opportunity to talk individually with prisoners who were locked down. He also provided programs on recovery from alcoholism and anger management. These programs attracted a great number of prisoners because these classes were open to all the prisoners. Lots of African American prisoners came to these classes.

Father Tom celebrated two Masses on the weekends at Old Folsom Prison, the Saturday Vigil and one Mass on Sunday morning. The Saturday Vigil was bi-lingual, English and Spanish, and on Sunday the Mass was in English. He found that the most active Catholics among the prison population were Hispanics who came faithfully to church.

The biggest issue that prisoners had to deal with was fear, depression and abandonment by family and friends. One-on-one counseling and grief counseling when a loved one died was one of Father Tom's main ministries.

RETIREMENT

Father Tom had no intention of retiring until he began to have heart problems. He consulted doctors about his heart condition and every time he saw the doctor he had to get a letter from the doctor saying he was fit to work. Father Tom eventually had stents put into clogged veins and he began to consider retirement. He finally decided it was time to retire from his chaplaincy at Folsom Prison in May 2006.

During the time he was prison chaplain, Father Tom had his own home in Plymouth and then in Folsom. After he retired, he enjoyed working in his home garden in his backyard of his home. After retiring, he was able to travel around the diocese to help in parishes. He helped in both mountain parishes and those in the valley. He enjoyed discovering places in California where he was not familiar and he began serving as chaplain on cruise ships and traveled the world. Since retirement, he has been actively involved with paroled inmates who are endeavoring to reconstruct their lives in difficult circumstances. He meets with them frequently for dinner and social events and shares the joys of their successes.

MOVE TO THE PRIESTS RETIREMENT VILLAGE

As Father Tom began to experience some medical issues like sleep-apnea and tonsillitis, he had his tonsils removed when he was 73 years of age and from a biopsy, it was discovered that he had non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Feeling his life was at risk, he thought it would be better for him to

move to the Priests' Retirement community where he had close priest friends. It was a time for him to downsize his worldly possessions and he did. Father Tom moved to the Priests' Village in Citrus Heights on July 12, 2017 and he says it has been a wonderful experience for him.

FATHER TOM'S CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"I have never had any regrets about ministering in the Sacramento Diocese. I feel a deep love for this people and this state, the beauty and diversity of its people matched and exceeded only by its spectacular vistas."



Photo by John E Boll

Father Tom's Residence at the Priests' Retirement Village in Citrus Heights

FINAL THOUGHTS

Father Thomas Maguire has had an interesting life with many varied ministries and experiences. He faced some real challenges but has always kept his sense of humor and the ability to laugh at the vagaries of life.

Tom has a keen memory of the events in his own life and in the life of the Diocese of Sacramento. He is a natural historian of the events and people who touched his life. He has an ability to size up situations quickly and make decisions on how to move forward. He has never been shy to face persons in authority and to hold his own in arguing his position.

When alcohol became a problem for him in his young priestly life, he made the decision to change his life and has not had an alcoholic drink since 1980. He thoroughly enjoyed being part of the MAT (Masters of Arts in Teaching) program established by Father Patrick McGrath and the University of San Francisco for the priests and sisters of the Diocese of Sacramento from 1971 to 1973. The Diocese of Sacramento can be proud of Father Tom Maguire who is one of its wise, dedicated and humorous priests with never lost his sense of humor and the ability to laugh.



Photo courtesy of Fr Tom Maguire

**Father Maguire Celebrates his Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Ordination in 1994
at Saint Mary Church, Glenfarne, where he was baptized, confirmed, received First Communion and
celebrated his First Mass**



**L-R Standing: Dessie, nephew; Gerrard, nephew; Marie, niece
Sitting: Pamela, niece; Hughie, brother; Father Tom; Margaret, niece with her son Connor**



Photo by John E Boll

**Fathers Patrick Leslie, John Cantwell and Thomas Maguire Celebrate 50 Years as Priests
St Patrick Church, Placerville, May 3, 2019**

*Thank you Father Tom,
For your Fifty Years of Priestly Ministry
In the Diocese of Sacramento,
Your friendship as a brother priest,
Your laughter and sense of humor,
And your insightful and wise counsel
In dealing with the challenges of life.
We wish you many happy days to come!*

AD MULTOS ANNOS



Photo courtesy of Fr Thomas Maguire

Tom Maguire and his Sister Catherine

1962



Father Thomas Maguire