

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 77

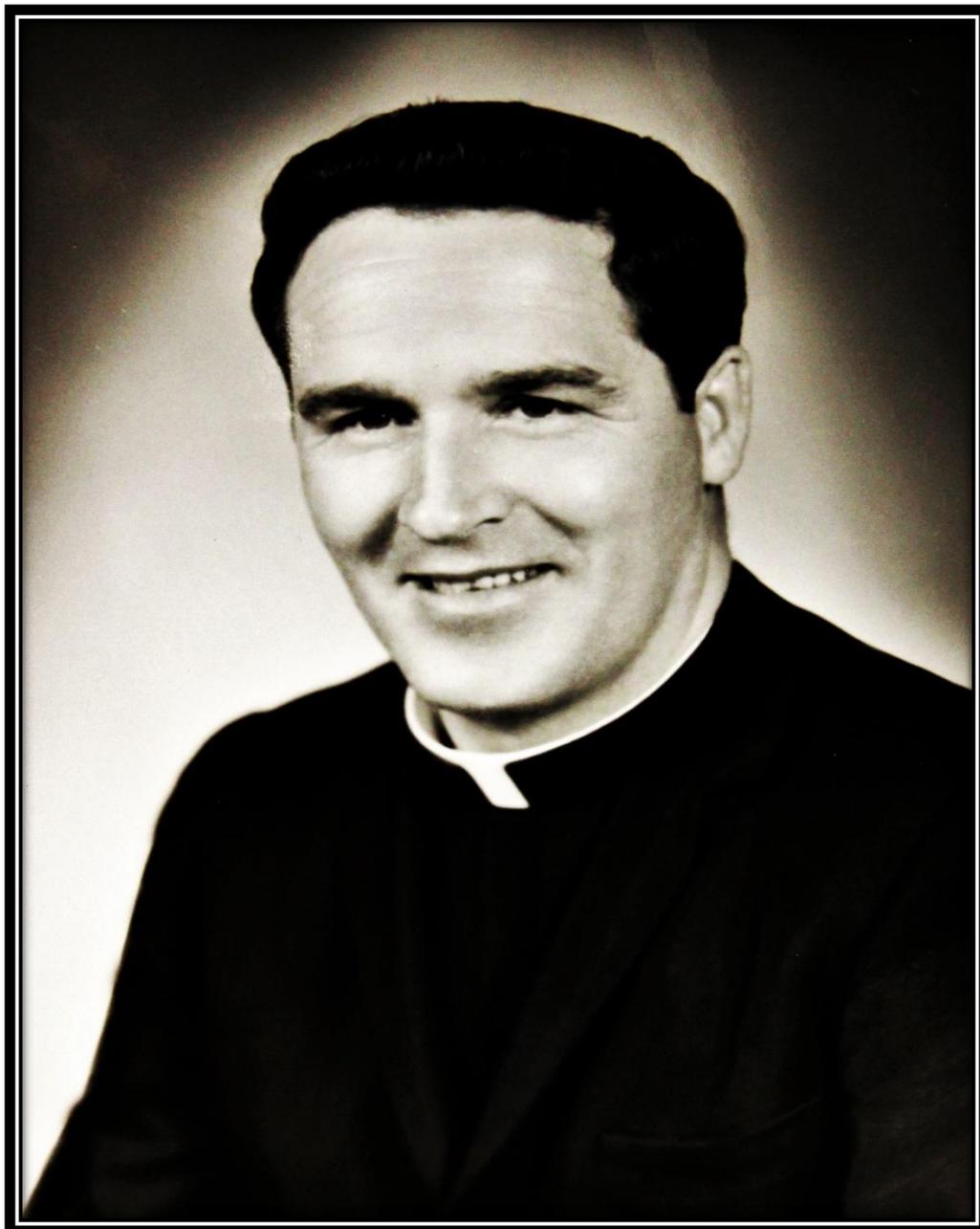
Father Sean James Moloney

Native of Loughrea, County Galway, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, Corning, California

November 22, 1931 - November 5, 2001



Sean James Moloney was born on November 22, 1931 in Loughrea, County Galway, to John Moloney and Bridget Duffy. He was baptized on November 29, 1931 in the local parish church of Kilbeacanty.

BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

In 1938, Sean began his education at Carrabane National School in Athenry, County Galway, until 1945. He then transferred to Christian Brothers High School in Loughrea, County Galway, from September 1945 to June 1950. After graduation, he worked on the family farm for two years.

SEMINARY TRAINING IN THURLES, COUNTY TIPPERARY

In September 1952, Sean began his seminary training at Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, County Tipperary, completing his theological studies in June 1958. He was incardinated in the Diocese of Sacramento in June 1955 in preparation for his ordination three years later.



Photo from the Web

Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, Ireland

ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR SERVICE IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO



Sean James Moloney was ordained a priest on June 15, 1958 in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Thurles, by Archbishop Jeremiah Kinane, Metropolitan Archbishop of Cashel and Emlly, for service in the Diocese of Sacramento in California.

After his ordination, Father Sean spent a couple months at home with his family before making the long trip from Ireland to Sacramento to begin his life of ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento in Northern California.

Metropolitan Archbishop Jeremiah Kinane, Archdiocese of Cashel and Emlly

FATHER MOLONEY BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

When Father Sean arrived in Sacramento, the bishop of the diocese was Bishop Joseph T McGucken. It was Bishop McGucken who appointed him to his first parish assignment at one of the most remote parishes in the diocese, Saint Joseph Parish in Crescent City.

In 1952, Father James White was appointed to Saint Joseph Church and he was determined to establish a Catholic school in this Crescent City parish. Numerous requests and prayers for Sisters to staff the school were finally answered when the Franciscan Sisters of Dubuque Iowa agreed to staff the school. Saint Joseph Catholic School opened in September 1954 with one hundred fifty-six students. In June 1958, under the new pastor, Father John P Farrell, it was discovered that the school required considerable structural repairs.

The church building was also checked and it too revealed termites and dry rot. The parish community decided that the church should be abandoned and services were held in the school. However, on February 14, 1959, Assistant Pastor Father Sean Moloney came to the school to celebrate Mass only to find that the roof of the school had been blown off during a typical Crescent City downpour. A decision was made to erect a multi-purpose building for use as a temporary Church and future use as a school gymnasium and parish hall. Construction of the fifth church for Crescent City began in November 1960 and was dedicated in July 1961.

Crescent City lies twenty miles south of the Oregon border on Highway 101. Father Moloney served this parish as an assistant from October 31, 1958 to March 19, 1959.



Photo by John E Boll

The Present Saint Joseph Church, Crescent City, Del Norte County, California

NEXT ASSIGNMENT, CHICO

On March 19, 1959, the Feast of Saint Joseph, Bishop McGucken appointed Father Moloney as assistant pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church in Chico to assist Father Cornelius S O'Connor who was appointed pastor in 1958. This was a short assignment for Father Sean lasting only 13 months until April 27, 1960.



Photo from Saint John the Baptist Archives

The Newly Remodeled Saint John the Baptist Church, Chico, 2021

OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH, COLUSA

Father Sean's next appointment by Bishop McGucken was as second assistant of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Colusa to assist Father John J McGarry who served as pastor of Colusa from 1947 to 1967. Father Sean served the Colusa parish for five years, April 27, 1960 to March 1, 1965.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, FOLSOM

After serving the Colusa parish for five years, on March 1, 1965, Bishop Alden J Bell appointed Father Moloney to Saint John the Baptist Parish in Folsom as assistant to Father Walter Albrecht, pastor of the Folsom parish.

Saint John the Baptist Parish was one of the oldest parishes in the diocese, established in 1857 when Folsom was under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and its Archbishop Joseph Alemany. The original church, still used for special celebrations, was built in 1857 on the

corner of Sibley and Natoma Streets. Surrounding the original church is the parish cemetery where 276 deceased parishioners are buried. Every so often, an elderly parishioner requests to be buried in the cemetery next to the original church where he or she may have been baptized, received First Communion or where the family attended Sunday Mass decades before.

Father Moloney served the Folsom parish for two years until September 15, 1967.



Photo by John E Boll

The Original Saint John the Baptist Church in Folsom

NEXT, SAINT PETER PARISH, SACRAMENTO

Father Sean's next assignment as assistant pastor of Saint Peter Parish in Sacramento was to assist Father Edward A Christen, founding pastor of the parish in 1955. Father Sean spent only one year at Saint Peter Parish, from September 15, 1967 to September 4, 1968.

FINAL APPOINTMENT AS AN ASSISTANT

The final assignment for Father Moloney as an assistant pastor was to Saint Philomene Parish in Sacramento on September 4, 1968. He joined Monsignor Raymond Renwald who himself was appointed pastor of Saint Philomene Parish in 1968 after serving as Rector of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament for the previous 17 years.

Father Sean served as assistant pastor of Saint Philomene Parish for four years until July 11, 1972.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Philomene Parish, Sacramento

NAMED PASTOR OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, DOWNIEVILLE

After serving as an assistant pastor for sixteen years, Father Sean Moloney was finally appointed pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Downieville. The Downieville parish was established in 1853 to serve the spiritual needs of the miners who searched for gold in the mountains and rivers in Sierra County east of Grass Valley and Nevada City. Father Sean succeeded Father J Declan O’Sullivan as the newly appointed pastor of the parish.

The Downieville parish had a number of mission churches. Since the North San Juan Mission Church of Saint John was closer to Nevada City and Grass Valley, the priest usually lived in the small rectory attached to the church in North San Juan.

Other mission churches in the parish included Saint Thomas Church in Sierra City, Sierra County; Saint Anthony Church, Challenge, Yuba County; Saint Michael Church, Alleghany, Sierra County; and Saint Columcille, Malakoff Diggins, Nevada County. There were certainly enough opportunities for a pastor to keep busy if he had the energy and inclination to travel around his sprawling parish to visit his parishioners scattered throughout the region. From the list of pastors who served this parish, the average length of their pastorates was about three years.

Father Sean served as pastor of the Downieville parish from July 11, 1972 to July 1, 1976.



Photo by John E Boll

Immaculate Conception Church, Downieville

PASTORATE OF SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH, OROVILLE

On July 1, 1976, Bishop Alden Bell appointed Father Sean Moloney pastor of Saint Thomas Parish in Oroville. This parish was founded by Bishop Eugene O'Connell in 1864 when he was bishop of the Vicariate of Marysville. The founding pastor was Father Thomas Crinnion in 1864. Unfortunately, he died three years later on January 2, 1867.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Oroville

Father Sean served as pastor of this parish from July 1, 1976 to December 10, 1982 which, in today's terms, would be a full six year term as pastor.

FINAL PARISH, IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, CORNING

On December 10, 1982, Bishop Francis A Quinn appointed Father Sean to his final pastorate of Immaculate Conception Parish in Corning. This pastorate would be Father Sean's longest assignment covering a period of fourteen years, 1982 to November 22, 1996.



Photo by John E Boll

Immaculate Conception Church, Corning

FATHER SEAN SERIOUSLY INJURED IN A SKIING ACCIDENT

Father Sean was an excellent snow skier who was taught to ski by Father Patrick O'Connor. He made a trip to Sun Valley, Idaho for a week's skiing with Father Tom Relihan and friend Doug Dirks from Oroville. It was a cold day when he began his day of skiing. On one of his runs down the mountainside, Father Sean hit an area of deadly slick ice and lost his balance. He fell and slid down the hillside, gaining speed as he went until he crashed into the base of a tree, seriously injuring his left arm and shoulder. As a result of his injury, he lost total use of his left arm for the rest of his life.

Although Father Sean had no feeling in his left arm, he suffered excruciating pain in that arm. The medical doctors eventually suggested the arm be amputated but he could still possibly suffer from phantom pain even with the arm gone. Consequently, Father Sean decided not to have the surgery and did his best to control the pain with medication.

FATHER SEAN RETIRES

After serving the Corning parish for fourteen years as pastor, Father Sean retired on November 22, 1996. Bishop William Weigand named him Pastor Emeritus of Immaculate Conception Parish in Corning.

Denise Dunn, parish secretary and bookkeeper at the Corning parish, said she always looked forward to the amiable Irish priest's "pop in" visits to see former parishioners. "He was very kindhearted, a faithful friend, and very sensitive to other people's feelings," she said. She noted that one of his gifts as a priest was his ability to "teach and encourage people to continue to grow in their faith."

Father Sean enjoyed a wide circle of friends among his fellow priests. Father John Hannan who had known Father Moloney since they attended Saint Patrick Seminary together, said, "He had a kind of kidding personality at heart and was never rattled by things. He had a great love for his family and for Ireland. The priests of the diocese loved him."

FATHER SEAN'S FIVE YEARS OF RETIREMENT

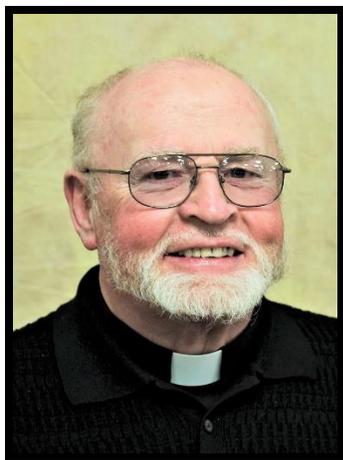
In retirement, Father Sean moved to an apartment on Bell Avenue in Sacramento, not far from Saint Philomene Church where he had served as an assistant from 1968 to 1972. He was able to care for himself and did his best to enjoy his retirement.

DEATH COMES TO FATHER MOLONEY

Father Sean's hip began to give him trouble and he needed to have a hip replacement. The hip surgery was done at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento in October 2001. The surgery went well. He was beginning post-op physical therapy when he suddenly died on Monday, November 5, 2001, in Sutter Hospital at the age of 69, seventeen days shy of his 70th birthday.

THE FUNERAL FOR FATHER MOLONEY

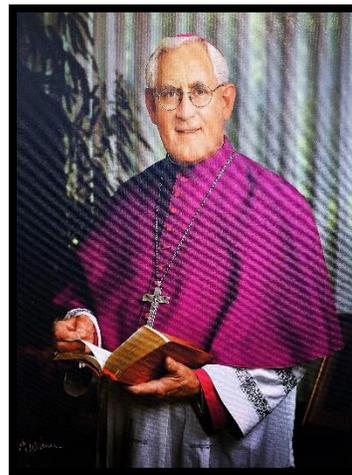
The Funeral Mass for Father Sean Moloney was held in Saint Philomene Church in Sacramento on Friday, November 9, 2001.



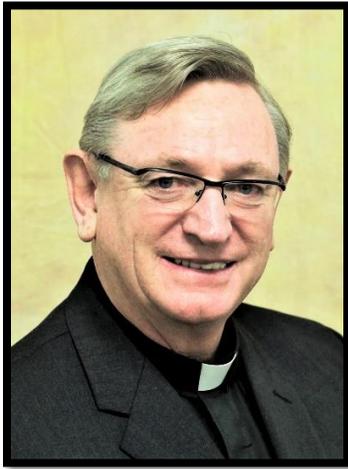
Father Thomas Maguire

Bishop William K Weigand was the presider at the Mass and Father Thomas Maguire was the homilist.

After the Funeral Mass in Sacramento, Father Sean's body was taken to the Sacramento International Airport for the final flight back to Ireland where a Mass was celebrated for him in his home parish in Ireland.



Bishop William Weigand



Father Daniel Looney

Since Father Dan Looney was in Ireland for his mother's funeral at the time, he was the celebrant of the Funeral Mass for Father Moloney in Loughrea, County Galway.

Serving as an honor guard at the Mass was Father Sean's old hurling teammates from Loughrea. Father Sean's body was buried in the parish cemetery that surrounded the church, along the pathway leading to the church doors which is reserved for the burial of priests. From that place, he awaits the day of the resurrection of the dead.

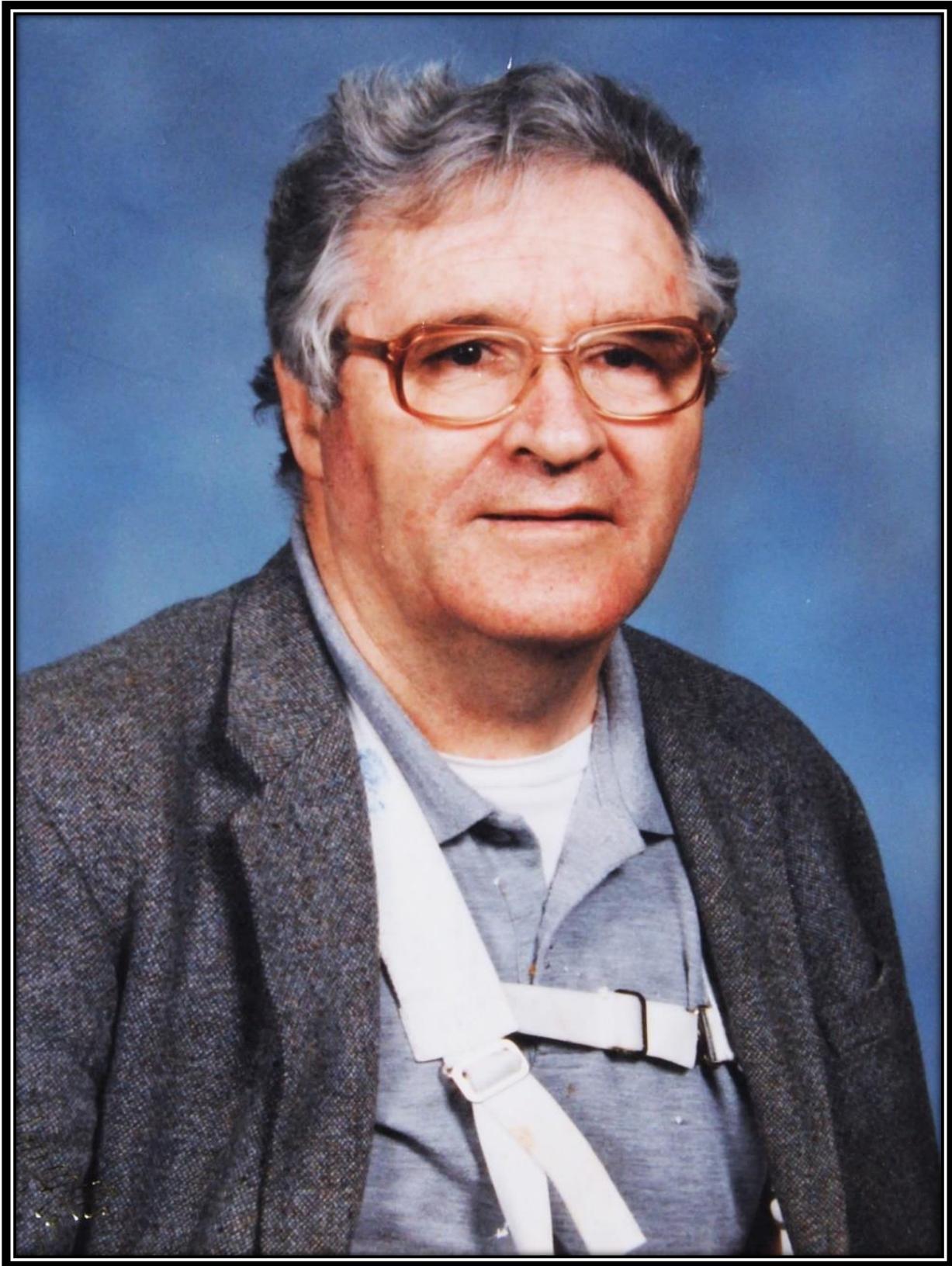
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Father Sean was well liked by his brother priests in the Diocese of Sacramento. He was easy going and enjoyed spending time with his brother priests and many friends. Wherever he was sent by the bishop of Sacramento, he went and did his best to serve the parishioners with the sacraments of Christ and a word of encouragement.

The skiing accident in Idaho was a life changing event for Sean. He suffered with great pain but continued on his journey as best he could while dealing with his physical pain. Thank you, Sean, for your 43 years of ministry to the People of God in this diocese which became your home.

Now you are free from pain and suffering, for the Lord has come to take you home to the new life of the Kingdom. Remember us as we move forward to the light of the Kingdom. Until we meet again in the Kingdom of God, pray for us.

*O Lord God of Heaven and Earth,
You have called Father Sean Moloney
Home to be with You in your Kingdom of
Light, Joy and Peace.
May he now be fully alive with all your
Saints in the Kingdom you have prepared for
all who love You. Amen*



Father Sean James Moloney