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## A CRITICAL LOOK AT BISHOP MANOGUE

By Monsignor James Gaffey, printed in the September 23, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

The most notable churchman of Mother-Lode California was Patrick Manogue, an Irish-born immigrant who had come to the United States in 1848 and who eventually became the first Catholic bishop to reside in Sacramento.

There is no question of Manogue's attractiveness even to the non-Catholic community. Arthur McEwen, an independent and influential journalist, was a genuine admirer of Manogue who, he said, had been in Virginia City a man "imbued with the hearty, masculine spirit of the place, and his sturdy, kindly spirit was too broad for church lines when need appealed to his sympathy."



**Bishop Patrick Manogue**

At Manogue's death, McEwen lauded his achievements as a pioneer priest, noting in an extraordinary tribute: "There are more polished, more scholarly priests in the Catholic community on the Pacific Coast but none more-godly, more manly than was Patrick Manogue." He was also a favorite of the priests. When Bishop O'Connell was negotiating for a coadjutor, the leading clergy recommended Manogue as the only man who could follow. He "is a child of the diocese," they informed the Holy See, "knows all its wants and necessities, is a man of the most practical sound sense, good judgment, and has more influence than any priest or bishop in the diocese, and he is the choice of the priests of the diocese."

On July 5, 1880, he was elected as O'Connell's coadjutor with the right of succession and was consecrated on January 16, 1881. Three years later, when Pope Leo XIII accepted O'Connell's resignation, Manogue succeeded as Bishop of Grass Valley, beginning an eventful eleven-year reign.

One of his early achievements was the re-arrangement of boundaries between his diocese and San Francisco. As the mining industry faded in the late 1800's a dark future loomed for the diocese of Grass Valley. It comprised almost 200,000 square miles, larger than Great Britain; and its population was in decline. Manogue pressed a new plan with Archbishop Patrick Riordan, re-drawing the boundaries and most importantly moving his see from Grass Valley to Sacramento, which had belonged to the archdiocese. This transfer to the state capitol assured growth for Manogue's diocese.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

**Today's Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament  
Built by Bishop Manogue and Renovated by Bishop William Weigand**

Unfortunately, his successes in northern California were slightly marred by a strained relationship with Archbishop Riordan. The issues which divided the two prelates were manifold and complex. They included the use of provincial funds for a seminary and a mission to the Chinese, as well as the amount of money for Bishop O'Connell's pension. One curious by-product of this difficult exchange between Sacramento and San Francisco were the comments on the cathedrals in the two cities. Enormously proud of his own Cathedral of the Blessed

Sacramento, Manogue acidly criticized St Mary's Cathedral which Riordan had newly built on the hilly side of Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco. "The new Cathedral under construction," Manogue reported to Rome, "has thirty-six stairs to climb to the two doors in front, stairs which are a terror to the old and weak. There was neither prudence nor judgment in choosing the site." When these remarks were shown to Riordan, Manogue was soon to regret them publicly.

On one issue he and his Archbishop were in agreement, the Catholic press. A partner in the ownership of the San Francisco Monitor, he crusaded for a strong and vital Catholic newspaper. While Riordan was preparing to reform the paper, Manogue insisted that the highest priority should be placed on content. "Even gilded edges," he warned in a letter, "will be of no avail if there be a lack of intrinsic worth." Above all, too, the editor must take care to be neutral on all purely political matters. His thoughts were the guiding ones for the archbishop who modernized and revitalized this historic weekly.

Patrick Manogue died on Ash Wednesday of 1895. This robust missionary may be best remembered for the indefatigable energy and manliness which he brought to his post in northern California. No greater tribute could have been given to him than the petition which his clergy developed after his death. In it they requested a leader who would be openly independent of the metropolitan see of San Francisco. Sacramento was not a satellite under Patrick Riordan, nor would it ever be under his successors.



Photo by John E Boll 2011

### **Interior of the Renovated Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacramento**

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