

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 2

Fr John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

No 39

BISHOP THOMAS GRACE SUCCEEDS MANOGUE Church in the Gold Mines

By Father John Dwyer, printed in the October 7, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

On June 11, 1867 in Dublin, among the many young priests ordained from All Hallows on that day, three were destined for the Vicariate of Marysville - James J. Claire of County Kerry, Matthew Coleman of County Louth, and Thomas Grace of County Wexford. The arrival of these three priests in September gave Bishop O'Connell the opportunity to create three new parishes. He set up the new "Railroad parish" with Father Mevel as pastor, replaced him in Oroville by Father O'Kane whom he brought from Weaverville, sent Father Coleman to fill that vacancy, and then divided the immense territory that once was the Weaverville parish, cutting off from it the counties of Shasta and Tehama and creating the parish of Red Bluff with Father Thomas Grace as the founding pastor. Thus when Father Coleman was sent to Weaverville, Trinity County alone was his responsibility.



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Father Matthew Coleman
One of Three Ordained for the Vicariate of Marysville in 1867

Likewise, the bishop took some of the immense territory which lay between Downieville and Grass Valley, an area with many mission churches, and created the parish of Nevada City. Father James J. Claire became its founding pastor.

Father Grace remained in Red Bluff only two years when he was transferred as assistant to Eureka for two years. In 1870 he was appointed pastor of Carson City. While there he built the present church, to which he gave the name St. Theresa, even though the old church was called St Mary's. Again his assignment was of short duration and in the fall of 1871 he was sent as an assistant to Father Dalton in Grass Valley where he remained until 1874 when he was appointed pastor of the Marysville Cathedral. He remained there with Bishop O'Connell for seven years and he may have been responsible for a change which began in 1876. Prior to that year Bishop O'Connell transferred most of his priests every two years, but beginning with 1876, we note a greater stability and longer assignments appearing.

Father Grace's next assignment was most unusual. When Bishop Manogue became the Coadjutor Bishop of Grass Valley in 1881, he immediately began negotiations with Archbishop Alemany and with Rome to try to get the city of Sacramento included in the old diocese. The only parish in Sacramento was St. Rose. In the arrangements between Bishop Manogue and the Archbishop, and almost in anticipation of approval, the Archbishop permitted the Coadjutor Bishop of Grass Valley to appoint a new pastor for St Rose, even though it still belonged to the San Francisco Archdiocese.

Bishop Manogue's choice was Father Grace of Marysville. But this proved to be a delicate matter as it was important who would be the pastor of Marysville especially with Bishop O'Connell still living there. Bishop Manogue solved that problem by bringing back to Marysville for the second time one of Bishop O'Connell's favorite priests, Father James J. Callan. Therefore in the fall of 1881, Father Grace became the pastor of St. Rose in Sacramento.

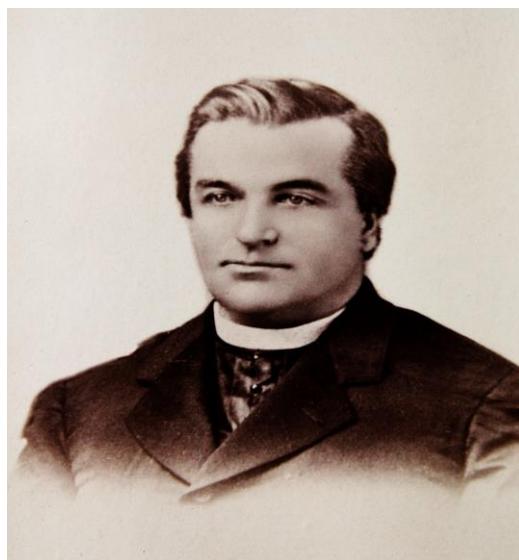


Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Father James J Callan

Thus when Bishop Manogue finally succeeded in getting the boundaries changed in 1886, he already had his own man in the Sacramento parish. Likewise he had someone there to assist him in purchasing land for the new cathedral. When the new cathedral was finished in June, 1889, and the clergy transferred to it from St Rose, Father Thomas Grace became its first pastor. Two years later when Bishop Manogue made his visitation to Rome, Father Grace accompanied him.

Bishop Manogue was not destined to lead for long the diocese he had created or get to enjoy the cathedral he had built, for on February 27, 1895, the giant Bishop of Sacramento died. The Diocese of Sacramento was without a shepherd all during 1895 while efforts were made to find a new bishop who would accept the burden. Father Grace was the choice of the priests but he resisted the appointment on the grounds that his health would not be able to withstand the difficulties of travel and the strain of the office. Finally after great difficulty he was persuaded to accept. He was consecrated Bishop of Sacramento on June 16, 1896 in Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, the only bishop ever consecrated in that venerable building (until recent times).

In spite of his poor health, Bishop Grace was shepherd of the diocese for twenty-five years. It was a period of very little growth as only two new parishes were made in those years. Confirmation circuits became less frequent, averaging once every three years. Thus Bishop Grace lived to see his 80th birthday. Death came to this venerable pioneer on December 27, 1921. Bishop O'Connell had once characterized him as "the preacher *par excellence*." A kindly and gentlemanly man was this second bishop of Sacramento.



Picture from the Diocesan Archives

Bishop Thomas Grace

Reluctantly Became the Second Bishop of Sacramento in 1896