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## HISPANIC BISHOP PICKED IN CAPITAL Bishop Alphonse Gallegos

By Robin Witt, Bee Staff Writer, Printed in the September 2, 1981 issue of *The Sacramento Bee*



**Bishop-Elect Alphonse Gallegos, OAR**

For the first time since 1861, a Hispanic priest has been appointed to the episcopacy of the sprawling 20-county Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento. The Reverend Alphonse Gallegos, 50, of Sacramento, was named by Pope John Paul II Tuesday to serve as auxiliary bishop of the Sacramento diocese, the first such assistant since the Reverend John S Cummins left the post in 1977. Tuesday, Gallegos formally began his duties – which are expected to be concentrated in areas of administration, youth and Hispanic affairs.

The appointment of Gallegos, a member of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, was announced officially by Archbishop Pio Laghi, the

apostolic delegate to the United States. In making the local announcement, Sacramento Bishop Francis A Quinn said Gallegos “possesses exceptional administrative skills, pastoral qualities and priestly dedication” and called him “qualified by training, experience and personal attributes.”

Gallegos, who was born in Albuquerque, N.M., and speaks Spanish fluently, had been serving as director for the Division of Hispanic Affairs in the Sacramento-based California Catholic Conference. He also served the heavily Hispanic St Rose parish in South Sacramento where he lived in residence.

Although the timing of the auxiliary bishop's appointment was unexpected, diocesan insiders have speculated for months that a Hispanic bishop was becoming a political necessity for Sacramento. Although a growing number of Northern California's Catholics have Spanish surnames, the last Hispanic bishop to serve the area was Bishop Jose Sadoc Alemany, who led the Archdiocese of San Francisco (which included Sacramento) from 1853-1861.

"I don't think anybody is too taken aback by his appointment, said one highly placed diocesan official. "The diocese indicated some while ago that it wanted more than one bishop, and that at least one should be Hispanic."

In a 1979 diocesan public opinion poll, 77 percent of the respondents said the 42,000 square-mile ecclesiastical unit needed more than one bishop. Another 42 percent said that a Hispanic bishop or auxiliary was needed.

The relative lack of Hispanics in the diocese had prompted criticism from Hispanic leaders such as Mario Obledo, secretary of the state Health and Welfare Agency. However, Obledo called the appointment "an expected surprise." Obledo said he has been in close touch with Quinn in recent months, but said he had not been given advance word of the appointment. "But I am elated. I have met Gallegos before, and I think he's very impressive," Obledo said.

Because of the size of the 92 parish diocese, which stretches to the Nevada and Oregon borders, Gallegos is expected to assist Quinn in his administrative, liturgical and pastoral duties. Reading a prepared statement in a clear and steady voice, Gallegos told reporters that he wished to thank Pope John Paul II, Bishop Quinn and all other priests, religious and laity in the diocese for their trust.

"To my Hispanic brothers and sisters, this honor bestowed upon me is truly an honor bestowed upon the Hispanic community," he said. And he hinted that he will see his Episcopal ministry largely as one of service to mankind. Quoting St Augustine, Gallegos said, "Above all things, let us love God and our neighborhood, for this is the principal precept given to us by God Himself."

He told reporters that he hopes to balance his ministry between the needs of youth, Hispanics and all the people of the diocese. Gallegos, who has served as an unofficial Catholic chaplain to low-rider youth along Franklin Boulevard, said: "I see Hispanics as a special ministry for me, since I am Hispanic myself." But he added, "This does not mean I will not be a pastor to all the people of the diocese."

And he said the church must make a special effort to attract and hold young Catholics. "We cannot just preach to the young; we must also listen," he said.

Gallegos, who was ordained in 1958, has extensive educational, pastoral and administrative experience. He holds degrees in philosophy and theology and has earned master's degrees in psychology, religious studies and education.

He has held a variety of church offices for the Spanish speaking and has served as pastor for San Miguel and Cristo Rey churches in Los Angeles.



Photo by Fr Joseph Huang

**Bishops Francis Quinn and Alphonse Gallegos  
At the Ad Limina Visit in Rome**