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THE PRISON IS HIS PARISH

Father Ignatius Haran, Chaplain at the Vacaville Medical Facility

By Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, Printed in the April 29, 1976 Issue of the *Catholic Herald*

The Holy Name Society meets every First Friday. Daily Mass is well-attended. The choir is all male and everyone participates on Sundays. An informal group greets newcomers and tries to make them comfortable in new surroundings. The Catholic and Protestant clergymen share genuine camaraderie. Where does this ideal parish exist? California Medical Facility, Vacaville, that's where.



Fr Haran at Holy Name Reunion at Vacaville Prison

"I look forward to coming to work each day," says Father Ignatius Haran, "pastor" of St Joseph's Chapel, Vacaville. "At the end of the day I know I have helped somebody."

Father Haran a native of Ireland, entered full-time prison ministry last year. He came to Vacaville with eleven years experience as chaplain at the Sacramento Medical Center which has a prison ward.

Vacaville prison is really two institutions in one. At the Reception – Guidance Center men from all of Northern California are tested and studied before being assigned to a prison. The California Medical Facility is the male penal institution. The entire population is nearly 1400 men with about 500 Catholics.

According to Father Haran, St. Joseph's Chapel functions much the same as any parish with Mass, confessions, weekly devotions and Stations of the Cross during Lent.

"I have performed six or seven marriages since I came," says Father Haran, "and we have had three adult baptisms." "I have never been involved in religion before," says Ron, a recent

convert. Ron took instructions through the Home Study Service, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. He is justly proud of the high scores he received on the six lessons and his certificate of completion.

Father Haran has succeeded in making St. Joseph's Chapel a relaxed place where the men can come to pray or just be. "I like the congeniality of the place," says Ernie. "You can come in without a hassle. You can get away to a quiet spot."

"The quietness and communion," adds Art, "give me the incentive to commune with Christ.

"We need no guards on duty during Mass, remarks Father. According to some of the inmates, the members of the staff who do attend Mass in the Chapel come as "brothers in the sight of God."

St Joseph's most active parish organization is the Holy Name Society, which is affiliated with the Holy name Society of St Mary's Church, Vacaville. The members really practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

The second Sunday of each month finds them receiving Communion as a group and praying together. The society's activities include getting those inmates confined to the hospital wing to Mass and the sacraments; making tapes for the blind; distributing magazines to the prisoners in closed-wings, as well as providing them with Christmas gifts and cards. In addition, the Holy Name Society organizes and operates the Chapel.

"You'd be amazed at the spiritual strength and activity you find here," says Buzz. "Without it I couldn't survive. I need hope and faith in something better."

Once a month the Holy Name Society meets with the St. Dismas Fellowship. The Fellowship is made up of interested people outside of prison who offer the inmates friendship, moral support, and help when they are ready to re-enter the community.

These two organizations collaborate in publishing a monthly magazine called *Prayboy*, which taps the talents of those inside and outside the prison.

Annually the Holy Name Society invites the St. Dismas Fellowship, family and friends to a reunion. The 13th annual reunion was held in late March and began with a con-celebrated Mass in the visiting room. Wally, the chapel's choir director, insists that the men take singing seriously. Although not a Catholic, he is actively involved with the Holy Name Society. "It's the only thing that keeps me going," says Wally, "It is the only place I can be me."

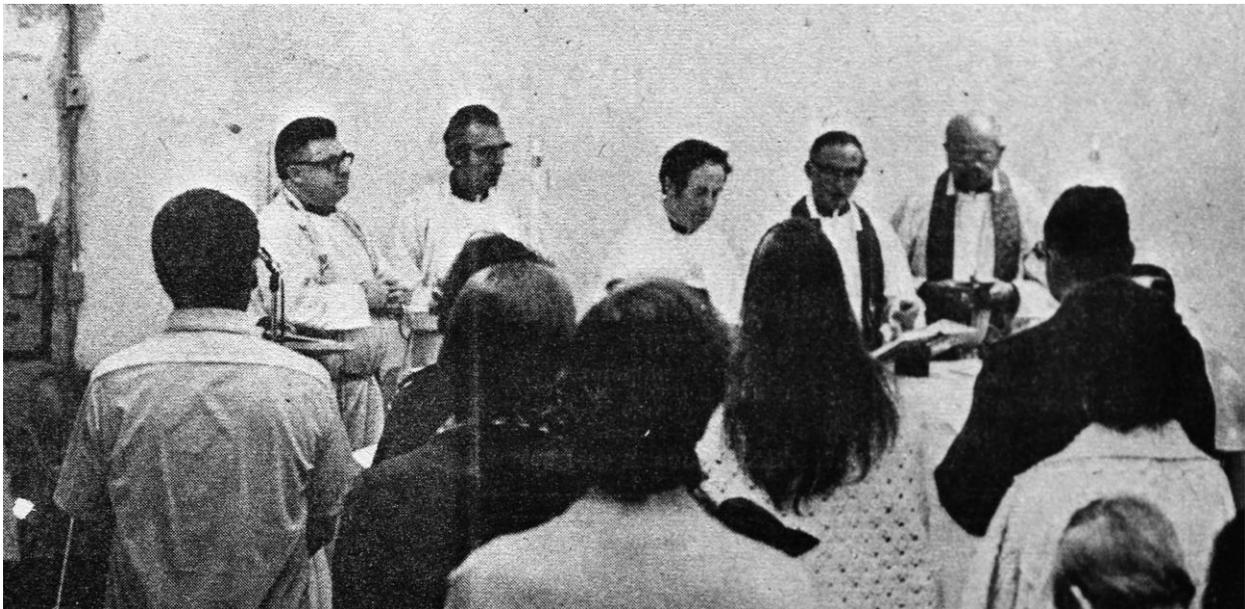
The Mass was followed by a banquet, complete with after-dinner speaker Dr. Nicholas Bond, Professor of Psychology at Sacramento State who spoke on the psychology of humor.

Probably the highlight of the reunion was the evening visit of the inmates with family and friends.

Father Haran's ministry is marked by energy and wit. "He's really a doer," Art remarks. "We're planning a surprise birthday party for him," one of the Holy Name members confides, "although he's pretty tough to fool."

In a recent *Prayboy*, Kevin writes, "He has a good word for everyone, whether it be praise or a verbal "kick in the pants," you know the good Father meant it...We can thank our lucky stars for Father I. Haran."

With this kind of support it's no wonder St. Joseph's pastor looks forward to coming to work in his parish!



Concelebrated Mass to Begin the Annual Holy Name Society Reunion in 1976

Concelebrants at the Mass in the Vacaville Medical Facility left to right: Fr Declan O'Sullivan, St Joseph Church, Marysville; Fr Gene Lucas, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento; Fr Ignatius Haran, Vacaville Prison Chaplain; Fr Ronan Brennan, St Joseph Church, Auburn; Fr Victor Wilkiemeyer, St Lawrence Church, Santa Clara

Diocesan Archivist's 2014 Update on Father Haran

Father Ignatius Haran began his ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento as assistant pastor of St Joseph Parish in Sacramento from October 1, 1959 to September 15, 1964. During his time at St Joseph Parish, he spent five months of study at the Center of Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

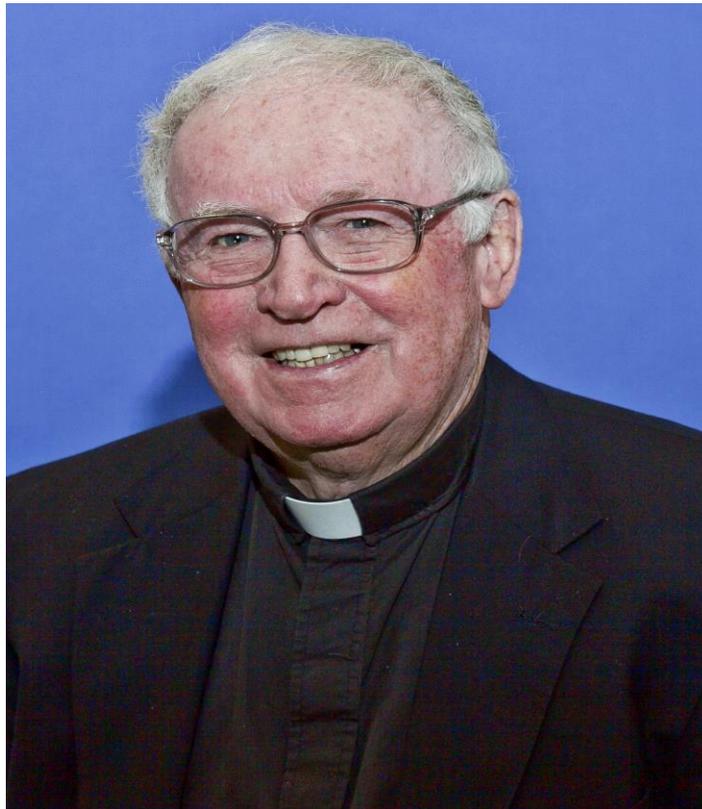
His second assignment was chaplain of the UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento with residence at Immaculate Conception Parish. He ministered to the sick and dying at the hospital for 14 years giving them faithful, compassionate and caring service.

Father Haran's third assignment was as chaplain to the California Medical Facility, Vacaville and this article is about the fruitful ministry he gave during his three years as the Catholic chaplain.

The Fourth assignment began on May 1, 1978 when Father Haran was appointed pastor of St Patrick Parish, Jackson. He served for 17 years in the beautiful wine country of Amador County. He was well known and greatly loved by the people of Jackson and Amador County.

Father Haran's last pastoral assignment was to St John the Baptist Parish in Folsom where he served as pastor from July 6, 1995 to August 1, 2008, retiring as Pastor Emeritus of St John the Baptist Parish.

Father Haran is now happily retired and lives in his own home in Folsom. We thank him for his 55 years of service to the People of God in the Church of Sacramento and wish him good health and continued zest for life in these years of retirement.



Father Ignatius Haran