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FATHER DANIEL SLATTERY PEOPLE FLOCKED TO HEAR HIM

By Fr John Dwyer, printed February 19, 1976 in the *Catholic Herald*

To confess to the fact that there were 35 children in your family could be an embarrassing admission today. This was not such in the last century. In fact, the Slattery's family of County Kerry in Ireland not only boasted of 35 children, but that three priests came from among them.

The oldest of these was Daniel Slattery. Born on January 21, 1831, Daniel was brought to the United States at the age of three. The ties with Ireland, however, were never severed, for when it came time for Daniel to begin his theological studies, back to Ireland he went to enter Maynooth Seminary outside of Dublin. When it came time for ordination to the priesthood, Archbishop Alemany of San Francisco sent for him and on November 5, 1854, ordained him a priest in the tiny St Francis Church on Vallejo Street.

His first appointment was as an assistant at St Rose Church in Sacramento, an assignment which lasted less than a year. On July 21, 1855, Father Daniel Slattery was appointed founding pastor of Columbia, Angel's and Murphy's, as it was listed in those days.

Father Slattery's pastorate at Columbia was of short duration, only two years, but it was to have lasting effects. First of all, he built the beautiful St Anne Church, dedicated by Archbishop Alemany on November 2, 1856, the church which has become part of the fame of Columbia, now a State Park. St Anne's has stood for one hundred and twenty years, and has seen continual service until a few years ago when a deteriorating wall forced its closing, awaiting the restoration that could preserve it for many more years.

But this was not Father Slattery's only contribution to Columbia. The impression he made in the minds and hearts of his parishioners was even more telling. Those who knew him tell of a tall man, erect in carriage, ever smiling, a most kind and sympathetic man whose golden voice drew great crowds to hear him preach. Very gifted in oratory, crowds flocked to hear him in those pre-radio and pre-television days. This kindly man was moved after only two years to be the second pastor of Marysville, when the Archbishop recalled Father Peter Magagnotto to St Francis Church in San Francisco.

This transfer took place on June 10, 1857. Father Slattery made the slow journey by stage coach to Stockton, boarded a boat down the San Joaquin River to San Francisco; then after a few days boarded another boat for Sacramento where he changed to the river steamer for Marysville. Just when he arrived in Marysville is not known, as the original baptismal book kept by Father Peter Magagnotto and by Father Slattery has disappeared. As in Columbia, his ministry was

destined to be short. In October 1860, he caught pneumonia, just as word had arrived that Marysville had been cut off with all of northern California and Nevada to be the See of a Vicariate Apostolic with Bishop Eugene O'Connell as the new bishop. Father Slattery was not destined to witness this event as he died on October 9, 1860. The new bishop now would have only six priests in his new Vicariate instead of seven.

As in Columbia, his parishioners so revered Father Slattery that they decided to bury him in the basement of the church. But his rest in this burial place was to be of short duration. When the new bishop arrived in March, it was at once requested by Father Slattery's family that the body be sent to San Francisco for burial. Therefore in June 1861, the coffin was disinterred and placed on a steamer bound for Sacramento. When the boat arrived in Sacramento on June 4, 1861, the coffin was taken to Saint Rose Church where a Funeral Mass was held. That night the body was placed on the San Francisco bound steamer "Yosemite," and when it arrived the next day, once again there was a procession, this time to Old St Mary's Cathedral where another funeral Mass was held. Finally, to the satisfaction of the family, the remains of Father Slattery were interred in Calvary Cemetery in San Francisco.



Photo by John E Boll

**Saint Joseph Church, Marysville
Cathedral of the Vicariate of Marysville**