

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

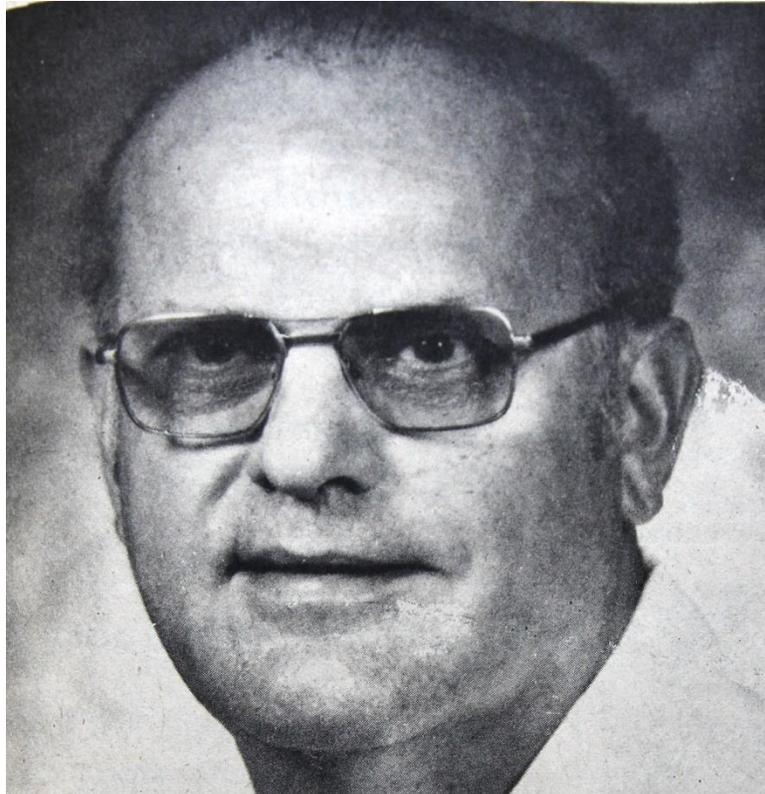
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FATHER GERARD SCHONS Named Vicar for Spanish Speaking

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Father Gerard Schons

Father Gerard Schons has been appointed Vicar for the Spanish speaking, a newly created position in the Sacramento Diocese, Bishop Alden J. Bell announced this week.

Father Schons, who was chosen after consultation with the Diocesan Personnel Board, resides at Saint Rose parish, Sacramento, and is principal of the elementary school there, as well as financial administrator at Bishop Manogue High School.

Asked if he was surprised at the appointment, Father Schons answered "No." His name topped a list of recommended candidates submitted earlier this summer by the Alianza Católica de Liberación, a Mexican-American organization based in Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento. "We will have to see this new job as a kind of unification of all the Mexican-American and Spanish programs in the diocese," he told the Herald.

“Yes, the Alianza recommended my name to the bishop but I also have a responsibility to the other Spanish speaking groups in the diocese. I hope to be able to mend all of the divisions in the Spanish speaking community,” he said.

Father Schons sees his role as primarily pastoral, he said, and will coordinate all existing Spanish speaking programs except the Department of Mexican-American Affairs (DMAA). The future of that department is under review by diocesan authorities, he said. “I hope to continue to encourage Spanish Masses in parishes and also try to get more Spanish speaking priests for the diocese, he told the Herald, “as well as encourage native vocations.”

“My idea is to have a kind of community of diocesan priests who are working together for the Spanish speaking apostolate and living together. Priests from Mexico or Spain who could live together here would bolster each other,” he said. “The problem with Spanish speaking priests who have come here in the past is that they did not feel accepted in American parishes.

Father Schons added that he favors the concept of national churches for Spanish speaking Catholics; because of the constant influx of Mexican immigrants, he said, national churches are needed, as they were for other ethnic groups in the past.

A job description released by the Chancery Office describes the role of the new vicar as “consultative to the Bishop, to pastors and to departments as needed.”

“The foremost role of the Vicar is to discern from pastors, from parish councils and from the Mexican people needs especially as to basic religious services. He should develop recommended policies for the participation of Spanish speaking at levels where of value in the diocese and in parishes,” the job description says.

A three member advisory board will advise the new vicar, and according to the Chancery Office release the board members will be Auxiliary Bishop John Cummins; Father Joseph Bishop, pastor of Saint Isidore Parish, Yuba City; and Father Jorge Moreno, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Sacramento.

A native of Chicago, Father Schons studied theology in the Catholic University of Chile where he was ordained in 1947. In 1962 he did a short course in Spanish literature in Guadalajara, Mexico, and speaks Spanish fluently.

He has been involved in Catholic schools in the Sacramento Diocese for the past 19 years, serving in both administrative and teaching posts in Christian Brothers High, Saint Francis High, Bishop Manogue High, and Saint Patrick Elementary schools. Before he was assistant at All Hallows parish, Sacramento, and Saint James Parish, Davis.