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Father John E Boll

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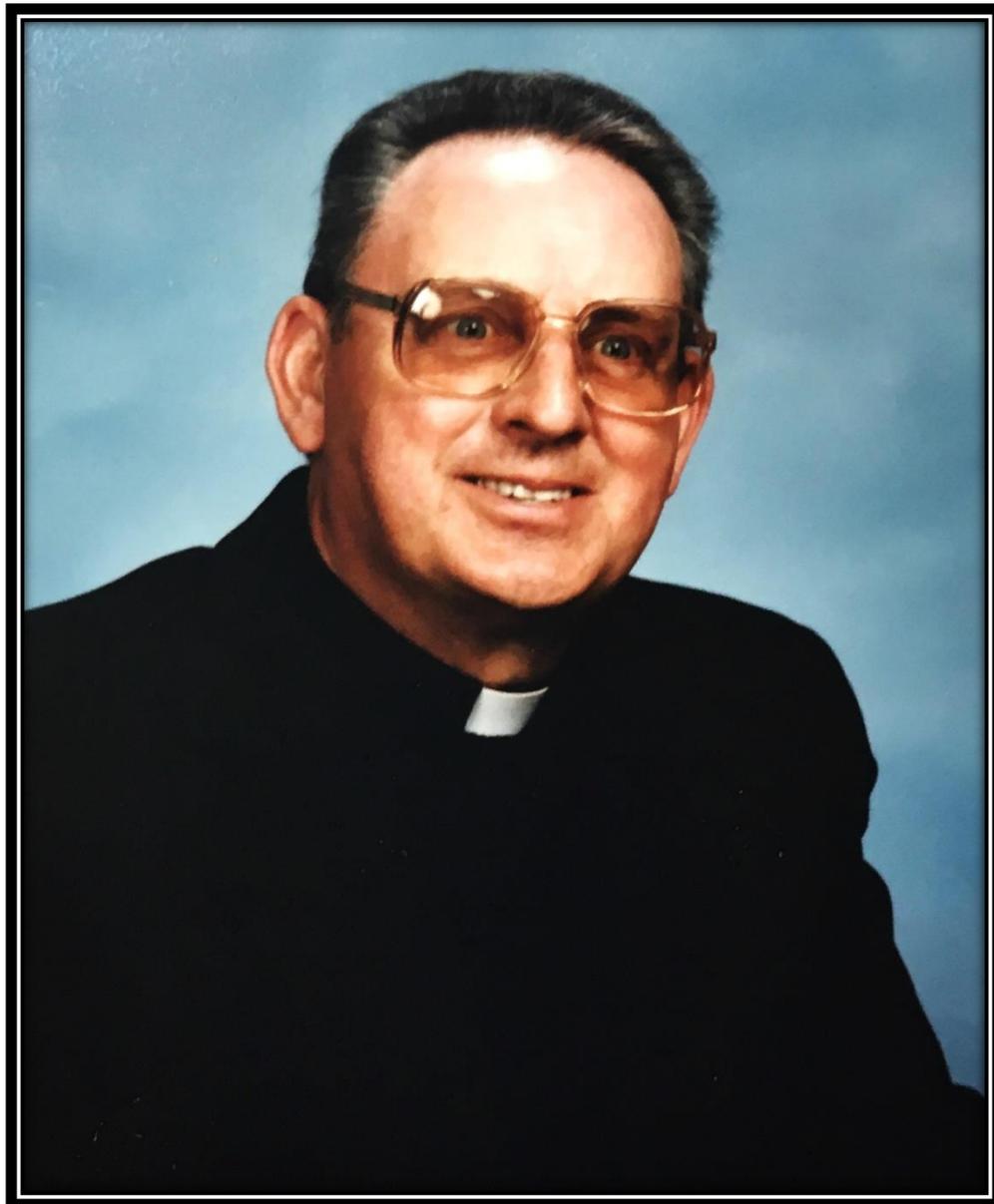
Father Matthias O'Callaghan

Native of Knochane, Donoughmore, County Cork, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Monica Parish, Willows

March 30, 1932 - April 19, 2009



Matthias O'Callaghan was born in Knockane, Donoughmore, County Cork, Ireland on March 30, 1932, son of Michael O'Callaghan and Ellen Ryan. His first years of school were spent at Firmount National School, Donoughmore, County Cork, from 1936 to 1945. He then attended Mount Melleray College in County Waterford from 1945 to 1950. After completing college, he studied at the Radio Telegraph Institute in Tivoli, County Cork, from 1953-1954.

He says that he spent a fair amount of energy running away from a vocation to the priesthood. There was a time that he wanted to be a medical doctor but there were already two doctors in the family. He signed on for a couple of years with the British Navy as a communications officer but "it became boring after a while. All I saw was water." Then one day he sat down for a heart-to-heart talk with his elder brother Michael who was a priest. "Michael told me I had a vocation to the priesthood and just hadn't admitted it," Matt said. "We all need direction sometimes."

ENTERS THE SEMINARY

Matt decided to enter the seminary and began his theological studies at Saint Kieran's College in Kilkenny, Ireland from 1956 to 1962. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento on June 3, 1962 at Saint Kiernan's College by Bishop Dunne.



Photo from the Web

Saint Kieran College, Kilkenny, Ireland

FIRST APPOINTMENT

After arriving in Sacramento, Father O'Callaghan experienced some culture shock as he moved from Ireland to California's capital but later found himself right at home in Sacramento. His first priestly assignment was as assistant at Saint Peter Parish in Sacramento in September 1962.

He remembers the parishioners as “fine people” and the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who staffed the parish school as very good. “The sisters were great, he said. “They knew how to teach children.”



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Peter Church, Sacramento

ASSISTANT AT ORLAND

In 1967, Father Matt left Saint Peter Parish to serve as assistant at Saint Dominic Parish in Orland from 1967 to 1972. During that time he had three different pastors, Fathers Thomas Boland, Jeremiah Boland and Daniel Cullinan.

Lori Kochnen of Chico met Father O’Callaghan when she was a 12 year old parishioner at Saint Dominic Parish. He would come to her family’s home for dinner each Sunday. She told *The Herald* that she cherished her 38 year friendship with Father Matt. “I think the reason I stayed in touch with him all these years is because I could trust him,” she said. “He defined what a priest should be. He always called it as it was when I asked him for advice and he understood that real life is not perfect,” she said. “When I presented him with issues and concerns, he gave me real life responses. I felt that he understood, even though he was not married or had children and walked in a different world than I did, but he understood the lives of laypeople and the issues we have.”



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Dominic Church, Orland

During the last six months of his life enduring chemotherapy, Father O’Callaghan “kept his humor and wit,” Miss Kochnen said. “To sit and chat with him and to be able to give back to him during this time made me grateful to know him.”

ASSISTANT AND THEN PASTOR OF OUR LADY OF GRACE PARISH

From 1972 to 1975, Father Matt served as parochial vicar at Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento, assisting Monsignor Eymard Gallagher who was pastor and editor of the *Catholic Herald*. The religious sisters teaching at the parish school were the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, a religious community from Putnam, Connecticut. They were a valuable resource to Father Matt because the sisters knew more about the parish than he and they helped him get to know the children in the parish school and their families.

When Monsignor Gallagher was appointed pastor of Presentation Parish in Sacramento, Father O’Callaghan succeeded him as pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish, serving as pastor of the parish from 1975 to 1994.

SISTER MICHAEL HENRY MOULIN, DHS, KNEW FATHER MATT WELL

Sister Michael Henry Moulin, DHS, met Father Matt in 1972 when he arrived in the parish and remained his close friend until his death. She was principal of Our Lady of Grace School from 1984

to 2006. Father O'Callaghan "used to give a homily at every weekday morning Mass and I could not wait to get home so I could share it with the other teachers," she said. "On Sundays, his homilies were so well prepared, personable and helpful. They were always spiritual."



Photo by John E Boll

Our Lady of Grace Church, West Sacramento

Father Matt "loved life," Sister Michael said. "One of his favorite sayings was, 'One trifle leads to perfection, but perfection is no trifle.' He would come to school every Thursday morning and be present to every child and visited every classroom. Then he would go to a nearby convalescent home to visit the elderly there."

Sister Michael called her longtime friend "a successful person because he lived well, laughed often and loved much. He enjoyed so much making people laugh and radiated joy wherever he went."

LAST PARISH ASSIGNMENT, WILLOWS

In 1994, Father O'Callaghan began his last pastorate at Saint Monica Parish in Willows where he served as pastor for thirteen years. He enjoyed his ministry with the people of Willows and in return, the people loved him as their pastor. Parishioner Aileen Carrier who coordinated the parish's Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults ministry found that Father Matt was "a very good organizer and a pretty introspective person who really cares about people." She said that Father

Matt was “always very thankful” for the contributions of lay ministry leaders as well as a faithful visitor to her late husband Herb during his illness.

For Barbara Linquist, parish bookkeeper, listening to Father O’Callaghan’s homilies at the 7:30 AM weekday Masses was “a great way to start the day. His homilies always had a message and encouraged her to “go out and solve all the day’s problems.” She considered Father Matt “a good friend with a great sense of humor.” She holds a special place in her heart for him because it was during his tenure as pastor that her daughter became the first female altar server at Saint Monica Church.

Father John Joe Myles, pastor emeritus of the Maxwell parish, said this about Father O’Callaghan: “He was a very faithful priest. If you rang the bell at the parish, he was always there ready to help his people.”

After giving 45 years of service in the people of the Diocese of Sacramento, Father O’Callaghan retired in 2007 and was named pastor emeritus of Saint Monica Parish in Willows. In an interview with the *Catholic Herald* when he retired, he said that he planned to live in Willows, help out as needed at Saint Monica Parish, enjoy daily walks, play a few rounds of golf and travel.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Monica Church, Willows

Father Maurice O'Brien, Father Matt's successor as pastor of Saint Monica Parish in Willows, said, "He had a sharp and clear mind and was an avid reader. He had thousands of books. That likely led to his good homilies."

STRICKEN WITH CANCER

Father Matt was stricken with colon cancer and died on April 9, 2009 at the age of 77. A Vigil was held for him at Saint Monica Church in Willows on Tuesday, April 21, 2009, and the next day his Funeral Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament by Bishop Jaime Soto as principal celebrant, together with Bishop Emeritus William K Weigand and many priest concelebrants, with many religious and laity of the diocese in attendance. He was laid to rest in the Priests' section at Saint Mary Cemetery in Sacramento.



Photo by John E Boll

Father Matthias O'Callaghan's Headstone Saint Mary Cemetery, Sacramento

IN MEMORIAM

I too knew Father Matt and remember his infectious laughter. When he laughed, everyone heard it loud and clear and joined him in that laughter. He had piercing blue eyes and a spontaneous spirit. He was a man of sharp mind and strong opinions. Had he chosen business instead of priestly ministry, he probably would have been a millionaire. He loved life and embraced it enthusiastically. As his headstone reminds us, "Stroll slowly through life and smell the roses."

Because of his outgoing and humorous personality, he became an excellent herald of the Good News of Jesus the Lord. He was loved by many and became a minister of the Gospel of Life, Hope and Joy to the People of God in this Diocese of Sacramento.

Thank you, Father Matt, for responding to God's to you to be a priest and for your willingness to leave your native Ireland to serve the People of God in the great Sacramento Valley of California. You dedicated your life to priestly ministry for 45 years in this diocese and we are grateful that you walked with us on the journey to the Kingdom. May God now grant you eternal peace!



*Lord, we thank you for the life and ministry of
Father Matthias O'Callaghan
Who served your people in this diocese of
Sacramento for 45 years.
May he abide with you in the joy and peace of
your Kingdom.*

*Eternal rest grant unto Father Matt, O Lord.
Let perpetual light shine upon him.
May his soul and the souls of all the faithful
Departed rest in peace.
Amen*