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The Sulpician Fathers Withdraw from Saint Patrick Seminary, Menlo Park, CA

May 2017

After 118 years serving Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park, the Sulpician Fathers made the decision to withdraw as the faculty and formators at the seminary. A final closing prayer service and luncheon was held at the seminary on Saturday, May 13, 2017 with over 400 people in attendance. Sacramento clergy alumni of Saint Patrick Seminary who attended this closing celebration were Monsignor James C Kidder, Father Joseph P Ternullo, Father John E Boll and Deacon Joseph Symkowick and his wife Patti.

At the closing prayer service, Sulpician Provincial Father John Kemper gave a final reflection.



Photo by John E Boll

Final Prayer Service with Father Gladstone Stevens, PSS, presider, and Father John Kemper, PSS, right

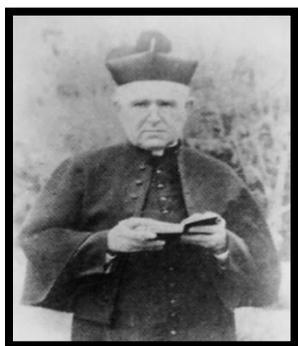
Father Kemper's Address:

Thank you for attending this midday prayer service to officially mark this transition in the history of St. Patrick's Seminary. The well-known essayist Emerson noted that the true value of a home is not found in its bricks and mortar – but rather in the guests that frequent it! Once again you honor The Society of St. Sulpice by your presence here today. We are grateful!

Today marks a moment of transition, as people of faith we believe in the activity of grace and the providence of God. Therefore, we believe that there is a time for everything under heaven. So there are not victors or victims here, no conquerors or conquered here. Today is simply a handing over of the leadership of St Patrick's Seminary back to its owner – the Archdiocese of San Francisco. It is similar to reading a good novel and ending one chapter and beginning another. This is not to say that this transition is without emotion. Since 1898 with the invitation of Archbishop Patrick Riordan, the second archbishop of San Francisco, the Sulpicians have cared for and served as good stewards of the charge they were given. It was in 1860 that the young Patrick Riordan first encountered the Sulpicians during a visit to our seminary in Paris, where he had hoped to enroll. Because of health concerns, the local Sulpician superior recommended that he consider a less rigorous seminary, so he enrolled in the American College of Louvain. In spite of this negative response to his seminary quest, he continued to admire the Sulpician model of formation.

I would like to highlight three Sulpician Rectors who served here at St. Patrick's and who captured the spirit of their day and exemplified the spirit of Sulpician formation. Fathers Ayrinhac, Nevins, and Laubacher.

Forging a strong Foundation:

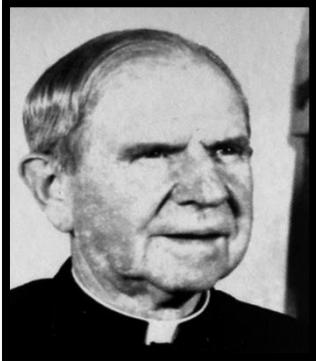


First, **Fr. Henri Ayrinhac**, commonly referred to as “The Boss”^[1], served as rector from 1904-1930. For over twenty-five years he administrated St. Patrick's Seminary with an “Iron Fist”. The discipline he demanded of the students and faculty alike, he too lived flawlessly as well. His funeral drew more than 200 priests. Not long after his death “the Boss” became a cult-like figure to many of the St. Patrick's graduates. Historians often credit three factors that contributed to Fr. Ayrinhac's successful style of governance:

- *First* being the distance between San Francisco and his other Sulpician institutions and confreres. St. Patrick's was an outpost and this geographical fact generates its own reality when it comes to governance.
- *Secondly*, the challenge of transforming sons of working class immigrants into men capable of doing theological studies. At one point more than 50% of the student population at St. Patrick's Seminary was born of Irish immigrant parents.

- *Thirdly*, as noted earlier Fr. Ayrinhac's exterior discipline was often mirrored internally and admired in his administrative style as rector by students and faculty like.

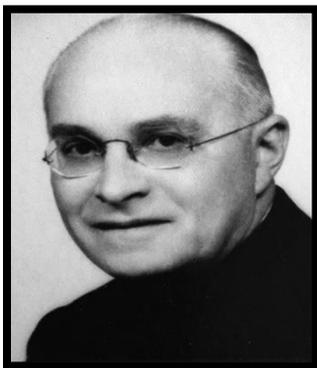
Builder of Community



Fr. Joseph V. Nevins, who served as rector for 10 years, 1934-1944, worked at building a community both within St. Patrick's and the larger community outside. In 1938 St. Patrick's Seminary won accreditation of its academic program by outside organizations. This may have been for St. Patrick's the first venture beyond the insular limits of the seminary property. Nevins likewise worked at building community within the seminary as well. He began the annual practice of the Deacon Farewell, which united the whole community. It was during this time the tag-line of "Men of Menlo" was coined, this tag-

line from the 1930s gave birth to the title of the book by James Gaffey. Gaffey notes that the Men of Menlo "were a force to reckon with and had a huge influence on the leadership of Northern California".

Navigator – during a time of transition



Father James A. Laubacher served as rector of St. Patrick's Seminary from 1967-1971. He was at the helm during the time of the Second Vatican Council, the sexual revolution of the 1960's and the Vietnam War era. Unlike in the past, now the social conflicts of the day find a platform for public dialogue within the seminary community. The Kerner Report issued in 1968 articulated the national divide between black and white – naming it was racism. The students at the seminary applied the research of the Kerner report to look at the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Their application infuriated the

Archbishop and he made his displeasure known to Fr. Laubacher. Fr. Laubacher defended the seminarian's right to engage in public debate, this put him at odds with the Archbishop. His decision catapulted St. Patrick's Seminary into current public debate, moving them from their monastic neutrality of their past.

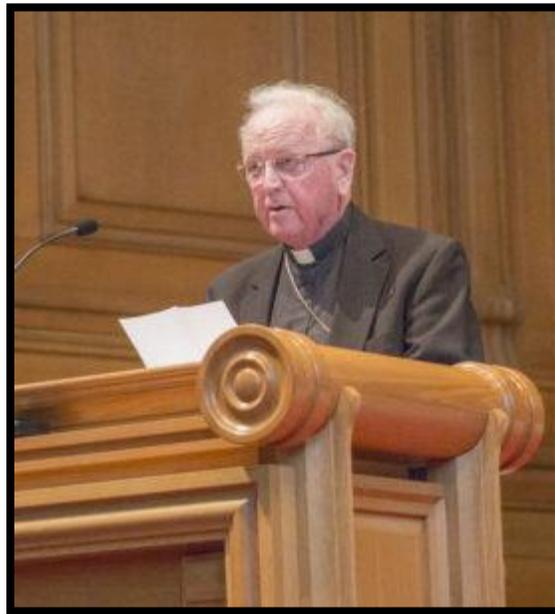
These three Sulpician rectors all shared the helm of leadership at St. Patrick's Seminary. Each of them bringing their unique gifts and talents to the challenges of their day, yet they all worked within the Sulpician model of formation. They embraced the vision of Fr. Jean-Jacques Olier, our founder, living and working within the confines of the Sulpician Constitution.

For the past few years, it has become increasingly harder for the Sulpicians community here at St. Patrick's to function as our Constitution mandates. And for those reasons on October 20, 2016

the Provincial Council voted to withdraw from St. Patrick's Seminary and return its governance back to its owner, the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

As today's scripture reading reminds us, there is a season for everything under the heavens, and now is the season for the Sulpicians to bid St. Patrick's Seminary ... *Adieu!*

[1] Mulligan diary (1944-1945) Nov. 24, 1944, 36.



Bishop Daniel Walsh reads a statement from Archbishop Cordileone

I am grateful to Bishop Walsh for expressing my greetings and best wishes to you all, and I regret that I cannot do so myself personally due to Confirmations at the Cathedral and other long-standing commitments on my calendar on this day that could not be changed.

Change is what very much marks this historical moment in the life of our seminary. A moment of transition such as this always has us looking in two directions: to the past with gratitude and to the future with hope.

We are grateful to the generations of priests, laity and religious who have contributed to the formation of priests here for nearly a one-and-a-quarter centuries. We are especially grateful to the members of the Priestly Society of St. Sulpice, who undertook the hard work of founding St. Patrick Seminary at the earnest appeal of Archbishop Riordan and who have led it in its mission up until now. The memories of so many professors, confessors, advisors, spiritual directors, rectors and vice-rectors, and staff members at every level in the life of the seminary will be cherished for a lifetime by those who hold them, and will continue beyond in the institutional memory of this place.

As we look to a future filled with challenges and opportunities, we do so with joyful expectation of God's blessing upon us whenever we do His work with selfless generosity and courageous fidelity, and filled with confidence because we continue to build upon the foundation that has been laid here by our predecessors in the work of priestly formation. With such confidence, generosity and fidelity, then, let us seize the opportunities that are before us with a renewed commitment to the mission of forming priests for the sanctification of God's people and the work of the New Evangelization.

As we embark upon the next academic year and beyond, let us remember that we will continue to share one communion of faith wherever our service to God's people leads us. And let us continue to pray for one another.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest. Amen.



Photo by John E Boll

Conclusion of the Prayer Service in the Seminary Chapel



Master of Ceremonies Joshua Keeney, a Third Year seminarian from the Diocese of Sacramento and President of the Student Body Council, introduced each speaker, beginning with Don Carroll, who attended St. Joseph's College from 1952 to 1958 and St. Patrick's Seminary from 1958 to 1960. He is also the Co-Founder and President of St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's Alumni Association.

“Thank you” and “goodbye” seem totally inadequate for 118 years.

There is present irony in reflecting upon how those 118 years began. As recounted by our distinguished alum, Msgr. Jim Gaffey in his biography of Archbishop Patrick Riordan [Gaffey, *Citizen of No Mean City*, 1976], Archbishop Alemany, the first Archbishop of San Francisco, and his successor, Archbishop Patrick Riordan, sought out the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice for a seminary. Archbishop Riordan persevered over a number of years, often invoking and receiving the support of Rome, for a seed bed for vocations on this the West Coast of the United States. Riordan was competing with St. Joseph's Dunwoodie in New York, a place much closer to Baltimore and Paris than the Wild West.

Riordan's perseverance was rewarded. And in gratitude Riordan released men to join the Sulpicians. He told one young priest he so released that the work of preparing priests was “higher and more meritorious work” than evangelization, the latter being “the work of the apostles” and the former “the work of Our Lord Himself.” [p.102] This “work of the Lord Himself” was committed to the Sulpicians by every Archbishop of San Francisco until present.

This “work of the Lord Himself” made St. Patrick's what the same Msgr. Gaffey called “the cradle of the western diocesan priesthood” [Gaffey, *Men of Menlo: Transformation of an American Seminary*, 1992]. This “cradle” has birthed bishops and priests – and also laymen like me who came to the Sulpicians seeking to find God's will. We laymen have been teachers, social workers, businessmen, academics, doctors, lawyers, judges, Assemblymen, State Senators, a Speaker and a Lt. Governor. Not bad for 118 years!

In the big Chapel there is of course the main altar. We laymen, products of this 118 years of Sulpician work, paid for the construction and installation of that altar. Our names are in one of the legs of that altar. At the time, I thought it fitting – as a visible symbol of support for present day seminarians who seek to know God's will for them. As long as that altar remains, it will be a symbol of support for the seminarians of today – and tomorrow – by the bishops, priests, and laymen who were the product of the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice for 118 years.

A full-throated “Thank you” and “Good Bye”, at least for now.



The second speaker was Fr. Robert McCann, a member of the current faculty serving as the Instructor of Pastoral Studies but his connection with the Sulpicians dates back to 1978 when he was a student at St. Patrick's where he received a Master of Divinity degree.

What can I say about 118 years of ministry and formation in three minutes?

St. Patrick Seminary has flourished because of the dedication, scholarship, leadership and discipleship of the 119 Sulpician priests who

have served here who answered the call of Jean-Jacques Olier to empower diocesan priests to train diocesan priests. As one Sulpician expressed it: “Your bishop has sent you here approving your candidacy and we will do all we can to help you to become the best diocesan priest you can become with the gifts God has given you.”

As a student, I was immersed in an outstanding course of studies, tempered with the ultimate goal of forming a good, reliable, pastoral and prayerful priest. I was given the encouraging words of Bob Gavin and Gene Konkle. I was set on a clear professional path put forth by Rich Gula. And each year Howard Bleichner challenged us to give the people a decent homily on Trinity Sunday.

We were challenged constantly to academic excellence: we were privileged to hear scripture interpreted by the internationally respected scholarship of Raymond Brown who lived and worked here so fruitfully in his retirement. Frank Norris challenged us to understand the liturgy rooted in an ecclesiology of the People of God and the baptism we share with all our Christian sisters and brothers within and outside our Catholic communion. John Mattingly worked to create a post Vatican II library, both academic and pastoral. Gerry Coleman communicated nuances in ethics that continue to guide us in this rapidly changing world. There were even classes on how to read Ratzinger, led by Bud Stevens.

These Sulpicians, and the many that I want to name but time will not allow, have taught me not just in the classroom. Academia was always balanced with prayer and the wisdom born of pastoral experience. The presence with us every day in the chapel, the availability day and night as doors stayed open for any student who needed to talk, the aging attempts to win against the students at a basketball game, and the sincere care and love of the priesthood all embodied the Seat of Wisdom in their lives here. Their legacy lives on in the many generations of clergy and the people they served and will continue to serve. The priests of Saint-Sulpice leave a rich legacy that will live on for generations to come.

All these serve to form us as pastoral ministers and servant leaders in the mold of Jesus.

My class was shocked and I was humbled eleven years ago, when I was asked to become an adjunct member of the St. Patrick's faculty and eventually the Chairman of the Pastoral Studies Department. Again and again I have been edified by the academic excellence, the scholarly research, and the dedication to wisdom that each Sulpician has lived. Each day teaching, tutoring, forming, advising and working with fellow faculty members, the Sulpicians have made St. Patrick's an institution that prepared every student for ordained ministry in the reality of an ever changing complex multi-ethnic, multi-generational and multicultural world where this Church in the West, the Pacific Rim and increasingly the rest of the country finds itself.

The warm welcome of local professors, priests, lay women and men to form a comprehensive faculty, has achieved for over a hundred years an institution that has sent out for ordination over two thousand priests and forty-three bishops and one cardinal.

The Church in the Western United States and Pacific Rim is far richer for the Sulpician way of formation that has empowered so many of us.

Even in every parish I have served I have met men who spent some time here but were not ordained who have come forward and declared they still meditate the way they learned at St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's or they thank God for the understanding of the scriptures that they received from the Sulpician institutions.

We must forever be grateful for the gift of these men. May God continue to bless the Sulpicians and may they know their efforts and examples will guide and direct the Church in the West for at least another hundred years.



The next speaker was Deacon Chris Kanowitz, from the Diocese of Reno, who is the Class Representative for the 4th Year Theology. Deacon Chris will be ordained on June 9 at St. Rose of Lima Parish.

Deacon Chris Kanowitz

When I arrived to St. Patrick's in August of 2010, a bright eyed and bushy tailed seminarian from Reno, I had never heard of a Sulpician. After seven years of formation, I cannot imagine never knowing them. What has made such a deep impression on me is the humanity of this company of gentlemen. They are real and authentic in their priestly lives, and I have appreciated seeing that humanity and being formed by it. During my time here, I have been blessed to know 14 Sulpicians ... as I think back on my years I remember the many wonderful experiences I have had with these men.

For instance there is the great music of Fr. Paul Maillet. Fr. Paul is a reflective man by nature, but when he sits at the piano, his spirit sings. I will treasure my memories of hearing Rachmoninoff and Chopin for years to come.

The brilliance of Fr. Bud Stevens. Honestly, I have never met anyone with such encyclopedic knowledge of theology. I truly appreciate that on the one hand he is able to devour so much information and assimilate it into his being, while on the other hand he is able to find such delight in chicken wings and bourbon.

The humility of Fr. Vincent Bui. When I think of those who have truly been living examples of the Gospel to me, Vincent is at the top of the list. The French School of Spirituality speaks of the life of the priest as an incarnation of the Word into his ministry and indeed his being. Fr. Bui embodies that reality.

The fatherly care of Fr. Jim McKearney. My first Rector when I came here, I miss very much his kindness, warmth, and encouragement. He was truly a Father to us and made St. Patrick's a home for me. I hope he knows how very grateful I and so many are to him and how very much he has been missed here.

But it was not only active Sulpicians we benefited from. We also had many retired Sulps. There was Fr. Jerry Brown, my Spiritual Director, who was joy-incarnate. I miss hearing his guffaw rattling the windows. There was the proverbial scholar and gentleman, Fr. John Kselman, who taught me to love the beauty of the Scriptures (the Holy Writ as he often said) and also taught me that good scotch and shortbread cookies do make a good combo, Fr. Fred Cwiekowski who encouraged us to appreciate the remarkable event that is the Second Vatican Council and live by its teachings, and Fr. Gene Konkel of blessed memory, who taught us that the reason we were here in the seminary was to journey together; that if Jesus Christ stood in our midst and we all gathered in a circle around him, each of us would only see him from our perspective. It was only together, that we could see the whole picture that is Christ, and it is only together, in communion with each other, that we can follow him.

These and many more are the memories and experiences that I will carry into ordained ministry. The late Maya Angelou once said there is nothing greater than "Thank you". These words seem so inadequate to express the profound gratitude I and so many countless men and women feel to the Sulpician Fathers. Yet they must suffice. May our ministry and service to the People of God

be a living monument to the work of the Priests of the Society of St. Sulpice. And to our fathers, as you depart St. Patrick's, may almighty God bless you in His kindness, pour out saving wisdom upon you, and lead you in the path of peace. Go with our gratitude and our love.



The final speaker this afternoon was Fr. John Kemper, PSS, the Provincial Superior of the Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the United States. A priest of the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, he holds a doctorate from Pacific School of Religion (GTU), Berkeley, California. Fr. Kemper was elected Provincial Superior in 2015 and also served as a Provincial Consultor for the past twelve years.

Fr. John Kemper, PSS

First and foremost I want to express words of thanks to all of you for taking the time to attend this farewell prayer service and luncheon today. Your presence here today is a wonderful support to the Sulpicians, both past and present.

During the 2016-2017 school year we had six full-time Sulpicians assigned to St. Patrick's Seminary. I would ask each to stand when their name is called – Fathers Bud Stevens, Chris Arockiaraj, Vincent Bui, Paul Maillet, Tony Pogorelc, and Jaime Robledo. (Give a round of applause.) It is worth noting that this is the largest number of Sulpicians assigned to any Sulpician house in the U.S.

I would also like to thank the support staff of St. Patrick's Seminary for their help in all the details of hospitality. Likewise, I would like to thank my administrative assistant, Carleen Kramer, for her role in coordinating this wonderful luncheon. Carleen, please stand ... (a round of applause).

In addition to this wonderful luncheon hosted by the Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the U.S., we also established a "Sulpician Scholarship." This scholarship is to be awarded to a seminarian sponsored by a Mission Diocese and in his final year of studies. At present, the corpus will only permit a partial tuition scholarship, but as the corpus grows through interest generated and future contributions by others, it is our hope that one day it will be a full year's

tuition scholarship. If you have already contributed to the Sulpician Scholarship – Thank You. If not there are envelopes for you to take home with you.

I would like to close my words of thanks with a quote from American poet Maya Angelou.

*If you must look back, do so for **Forgivingly***

*If you must look forward do so **Prayerfully***

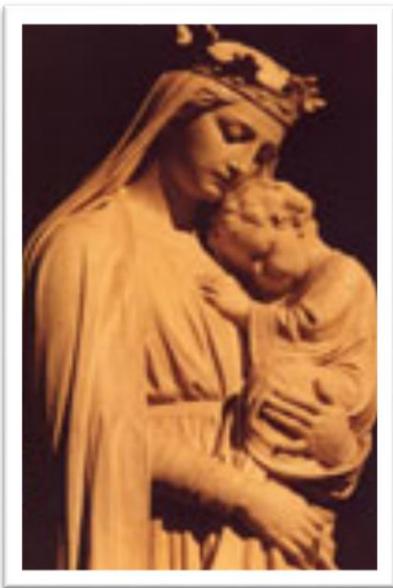
However, the wisest thing we can do is

*be present to the present **Gratefully***

With that, the Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the United States bids you *Adieu!*

Quick Facts

- Serve 57 Arch/dioceses and 19 International Arch/dioceses (11 of which are Zambian)
- Staff an additional 5 seminaries (U.S. & Zambia)
- Are responsible for a Baltimore parish of 800 families
- Coordinate and facilitate the Biennial Institute for Seminary Formators
- Operate three Sulpician seminaries with a total enrollment of 324
- **Founded by Father Jean Jacques Olier**



Sedes Sapientiae

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, the work of French sculptor Henri Bouriche (1826 – 1906). This statue is closely identified with the Sulpicians in the United States.

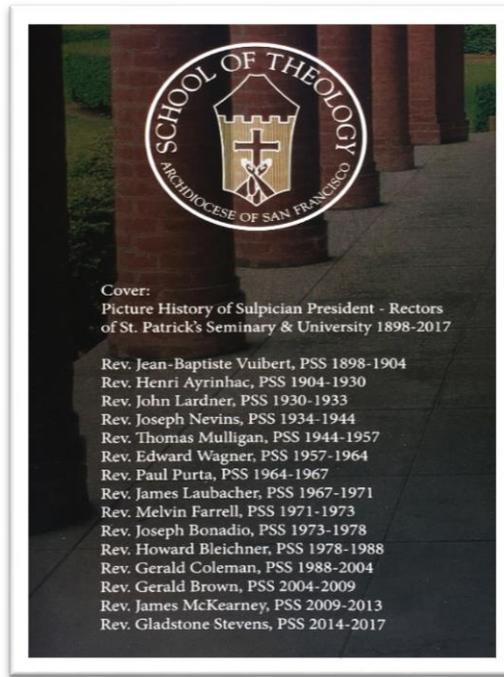
Rectors of Saint Patrick
1898 – 2017

ST. PATRICK'S SEMINARY & UNIVERSITY
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GRATITUDE

1898  2017



Sulpician Faculty of Saint Patrick Seminary
 2017



L-R, Rev Jaime E Robledo, PSS, Rev Vincent D Bui, PSS, Rev Gladstone H Stevens, PSS, Rev Chris Arockiaraj, PSS, Rev Paul A Maillet, PSS,
 Rev Anthony J Pogorelc, PSS

*The text of this article was published on the Sulpician website and is reprinted here as an article
 for the Sacramento Diocesan Archives.*