

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 5

Father John E Boll

No 47

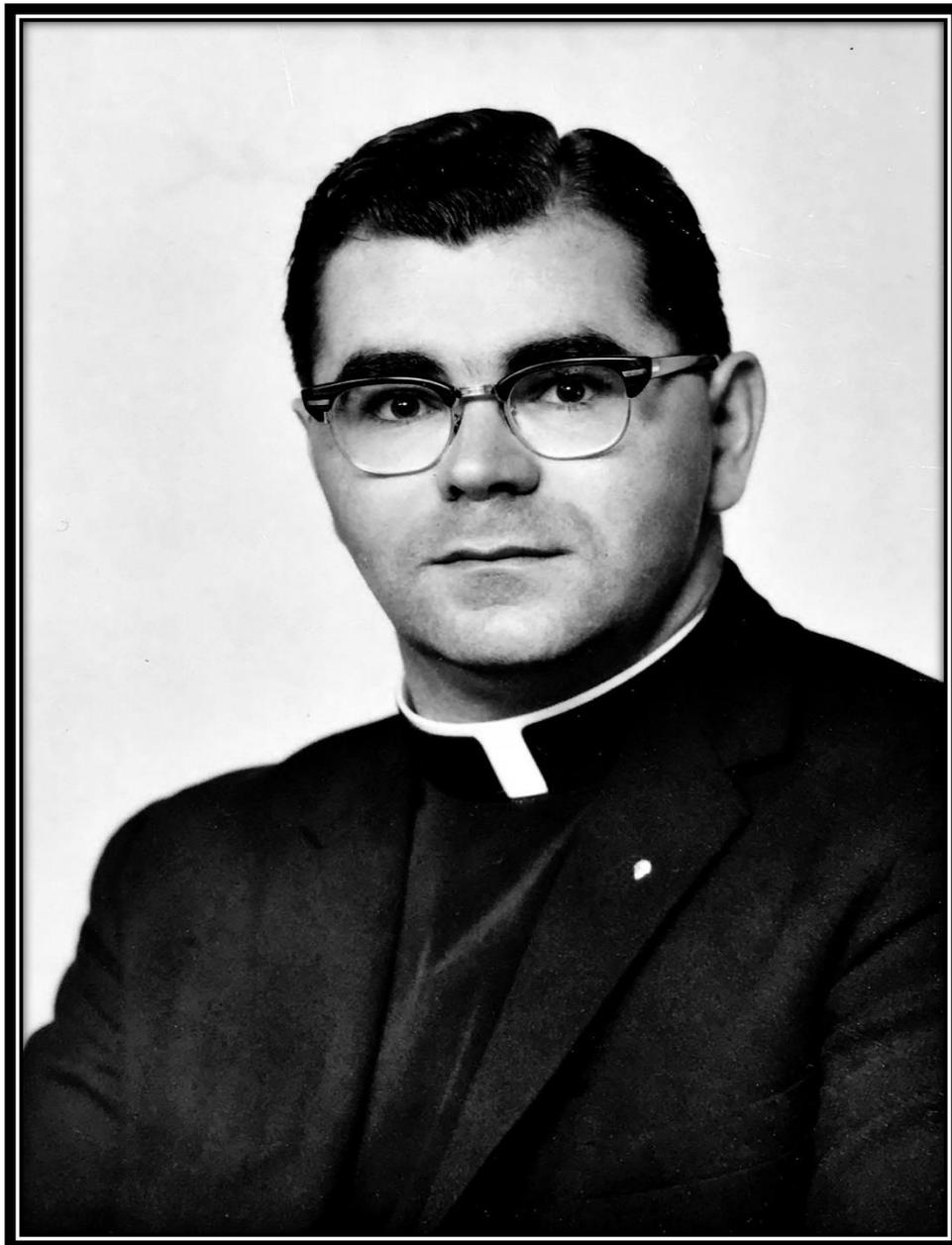
## *Father Thomas Francis Marshall*

Native Son of Ballymacelligott, Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, Marysville, California

October 21, 1942 – January 22, 1990



**Thomas Francis Marshall** was born on October 21, 1942 in Flembeys, Ballymacelligott, Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland, son of George Marshall and Katherine Kearney. His only brother is Michael.



Photo from the County Kerry website

### **A Country Scene in County Kerry, Ireland**

#### **BEGINS HIS EDUCATION**

Tom began his education at Ballymacelligott National School in Tralee and graduated from there in 1955. He then transferred to the Christian Brothers School for his secondary education and graduated from high school in 1958.

#### **ENTERS SAINT BRENDAN COLLEGE**

Having admired the work of the priests in Ireland from his youth, Tom felt a call to join them in the work of ministry. He applied to Saint Brendan College in Killarney and began there in September 1958, continuing his studies at the college seminary until June 1960. He studied Irish, English, Latin, history, geography, science and some Greek and French.



**Saint Brendan's College, Killarney**

## **MAJOR SEMINARY AND ORDINATION**

After graduating from Saint Brendan College in 1960, Tom transferred to Saint Patrick Seminary in Thurles, County Tipperary, to begin his theological training in preparation for ordination and ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento.



Photo from St Patrick's Website

### **Saint Patrick Seminary, Thurles, Ireland**

During his third year of theology at Saint Patrick Seminary, Tom wrote to Bishop Bell on January 23, 1965 saying that he would need to obtain a breviary so he could begin praying the daily office of the church. He went on to say, "From a study of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, I have come to the conclusion that the strength of the church depends on the activity of each of its members. Consequently, I believe that I would better fulfill the wishes of the Constitution and pray the breviary as it should be prayed by using the vernacular version. Therefore, in accordance with No 101, paragraph 1, of the Constitution, I request your gracious permission to use the English breviary. Your obedient servant, Thomas Marshall." Tom's request was granted by Bishop Bell on February 1, 1965.

## **ORDAINED A PRIEST**

Thomas Francis Marshall was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sacramento on June 12, 1966 in the Cathedral of Thurles, Ireland by Archbishop Thomas Morris, Archbishop of Cashel.

After spending some time with his family after ordination, Father Tom said goodbyes to his family and friends in Ireland and joined eight other newly ordained priests also leaving for ministry in Sacramento. Monsignor Cornelius Higgins wrote to the nine *ordinandi* telling them that they could spend some time in New York visiting relatives if they wished but all nine priests needed to arrive together in Sacramento on September 7, 1966.

### FIRST ASSIGNMENT

Father Marshall's first assignment was to serve Saint Joseph Parish in Auburn as assistant priest under the leadership of Father Patrick Sheehy who was pastor. He began his ministry in Auburn on October 18, 1966 and served there until September 1, 1972. During Father Tom's last year in Auburn, Father Sheehy died on March 18, 1972. During his last five months in the parish, he worked with Father Ronan Brennan who was appointed the new pastor of Auburn.



Photo by John E Boll

### Saint Joseph Church, Auburn

### ASSIGNED TO HOLY FAMILY PARISH

Beginning on September 1, 1972, Father Marshall was assigned to Holy Family Parish in Citrus Heights as assistant to Father Vito Mistretta who was pastor. This new parish assignment was a very positive experience for him. The parish had many young families that were eager to be part of a Vatican II parish. Father Mistretta was very positive about the changes brought about by the

Vatican Council and Holy Family Church was the first in the diocese to begin celebrating Mass facing the congregation.

Father Tom joined Father Nicholas Duggan as the junior assistant serving the parish. The next year in 1973, Father Duggan moved to a new assignment and was succeeded by newly ordained Father Joseph Ternullo. The three priests in the parish worked well together in ministry and Father Tom served five years at Holy Family Parish until September 14, 1977.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Holy Family Church, Citrus Heights**

#### **NEXT PARISH ASSIGNMENT, CARMICHAEL**

After five happy years in Citrus Heights, Father Tom was assigned to Saint John the Evangelist Church in Carmichael in 1977 as assistant to Father James Kenny who was pastor. This parish was established in 1960 and the parish community was growing. There was a parish school and the liturgies were celebrated in the parish hall which served as the parish church until the permanent church was built in 1987.

#### **PASTOR OF MARYSVILLE**

On October 4, 1982, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, Father Marshall was appointed to his first and only pastorate at Saint Joseph Parish, Marysville, the original Cathedral church of the Vicariate of Marysville which was established on September 27, 1860. Father Tom succeeded Father Gerard Schons who served as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish for only a year.

No doubt Father Tom was delighted to be appointed to his first pastorate after waiting 16 years for that day to come. This was a time when the Hispanic community was growing rapidly and his parochial vicar had to be Spanish speaking in order to minister to that large part of the parish community. When Father Tom arrived, Father Eugene Lucas was the assistant who spoke Spanish fluently.



Photo by John E Boll

### **Saint Joseph Church, Marysville**

#### **SUDDEN CHANGE IN STAFF**

While Father Tom was on vacation in Ireland in the fall of 1989, his assistant, Father Gene Lucas, was appointed pastor of Saint Anthony Parish in Winters. Father Manuel Soria, a priest of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, had recently arrived in Napa after the death of his mother in Mexico. He was visiting his brothers and sisters who lived in the Napa Valley.

Father Manuel spoke with Bishop Francis Quinn about the possibility of working for a time in the Diocese of Sacramento. Bishop Quinn happily welcomed Father Soria to Sacramento and he was assigned to the Cathedral in Sacramento. But with Father Lucas leaving Marysville, Father Manuel's assignment was suddenly changed from the Cathedral to Saint Joseph Parish in Marysville. He arrived in Marysville on October 4, 1989.

### **FATHER MARSHALL BECOMES ILL IN IRELAND**

Meanwhile, as Father Tom was visiting his family in County Kerry, he began having shortness of breath as he walked. He went to the doctor and ended up at Bon Secours Hospital in Dublin as a patient there from August 25 to September 8, 1989. His heart was enlarged and growing weaker. The doctors called his condition *idiopathic*, meaning a disease for which the cause is unknown.

Father Tom returned to Marysville in October and was put on a waiting list at Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto for a heart transplant. His good friend Father Paul Moran, C.S. Sp. came from Paradise to Marysville to help care for Father Tom and to assist with Masses in the parish.

Father Tom's strength significantly weakened and it took all his strength to walk 20 feet. Father Soria remembers the night when Fathers Tom, Paul Moran and he had dinner together in the rectory dining room. It was a wonderful meal together and when dinner was over, Father Tom struggled to the couch in the living room and told Paul and Manuel, "It is time for me go." Father Tom knew that without a heart transplant, he would not survive much longer.

He was taken to Stanford Hospital to be on site if a heart became available but he died at the hospital on Monday, January 22, 1990, at the age of 47.

### **FUNERAL FOR FATHER TOM**

The Funeral Mass for Father Marshall was held at Saint Joseph Church in Marysville on Thursday, January 25, 1990. Bishop Francis Quinn was the main celebrant, joined by Monsignor Vito Mistretta, pastor emeritus of Holy Family Parish, Citrus Heights; Father Manuel Soria, Father Marshall's associate; Father Gene Lucas, newly appointed pastor of Saint Anthony Parish, Winters; Father Dermot Dwyer, administrator of Saint Dominic Parish, Colfax; and Father Simon Twomey, pastor of Saint Thomas More Parish, Paradise, recently named pastor of Holy Family Parish, Citrus Heights, and 125 priests from the Diocese of Sacramento and beyond.

Saint Joseph Church was filled to overflowing with the parish community from Marysville and around the diocese. Father Tom's close friend, Father Paul Moran, C.S.Sp. was the homilist. In his homily, Father Paul shared his conversation with Father Tom at the breakfast table one morning a few weeks before. He asked Tom if he was angry at God because of his heart condition. Did he confront God with, "Why me?" Without hesitation, Father Tom responded. "No, I do not ask 'why me.' I say, 'why not me.'" This honest and humble response from Father Tom gives witness to his faith and trust in God without any question or bitterness because of his physical condition. Tom put his life in God's hands and trusted that God is always loving, kind and merciful.

### **BURIAL IN IRELAND**

It was Father Tom's wish that his body be buried in Ballymacelligott, County Kerry, Ireland. After the funeral, Father Paul Moran accompanied Father Tom's body to Ireland. When the plane landed in Ireland, the Marshall family was at the airport ready to take the body of Father Tom home. However, it was soon discovered that the casket had been put on another plane that

landed in England. Once the mistake was discovered by the airline, Father Tom's body was transferred to a plane headed for Ireland and at last Father Tom returned home for the final time.

A Mass was celebrated for Father Tom in his home parish for his family and friends and his body was laid to rest in the Ballymacelligott Cemetery in Kerry, the land of his birth.

#### **A REMBRANCE OF FATHER TOM**

The following appeared in the Yuba City *Appeal Democrat* on Thursday, February 8, 1990:

*I am writing to express my extreme gratitude for spiritual services Reverend Thomas F Marshall gave to our community. As a pastor of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, he was always near his phone, near the church, and happy to open the door of the rectory to anyone who called.*

*I am not a Catholic. However, when I experienced a time of great spiritual need, Father Marshall was there for me, as I am sure he was for the many of us in various walks of life who come to need real and permanent laws.*

*I feel I was privileged to know him and will hold his teachings in great respect. We have lost a spiritual giant and he will be deeply missed.*

*Katherine Hubbard, Yuba City*

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

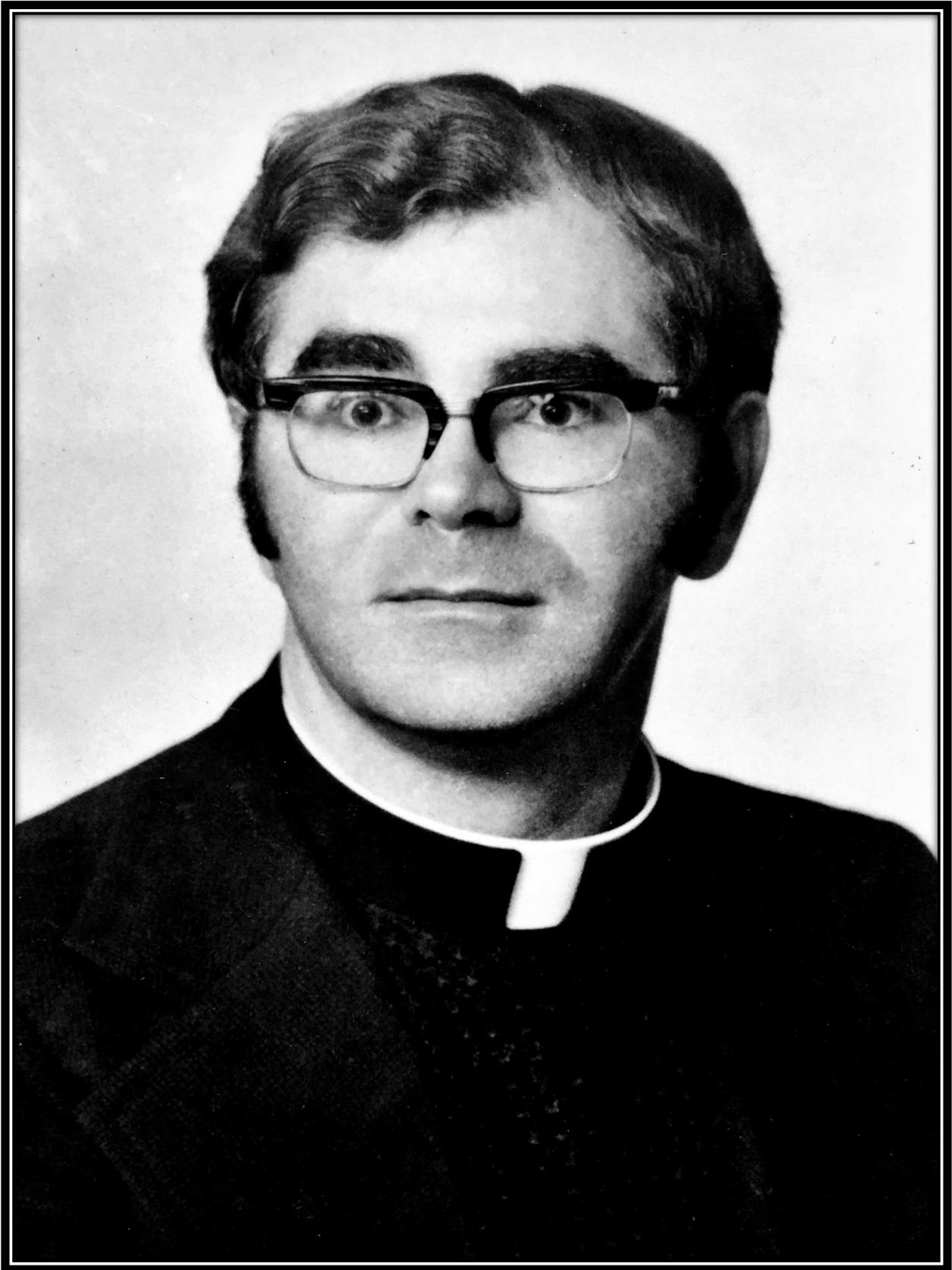
Father Tom Marshall was one of the nine priests who came from Ireland to serve the Church of Sacramento in 1966. Instead of staying in his native Ireland, he chose to be a missionary to the Church in California. Perhaps a line from Saint Brendan's prayer gives us an insight into Father Tom's decision to give his life to the missions: ***"Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown. Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You."***

Father Tom indeed set his face to the west and began a journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown. In faith, he left old ways and broke fresh ground with the Lord by his side.

Father Paul Moran said that Father Tom was a generous supporter of foreign missions, especially Saint James Mission, Villa, San Salvador. He was a humble, a soft-spoken "gem of a man."

When I was pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Lincoln, Fathers Tom Marshall and Dermot Dwyer would stop for a visit to say hello when they passed through Lincoln on their day off together.

It was a great loss to the Church of Sacramento when Father Marshall died at age 47 but this is the Lord's world and our lives are a gift from His hand. Only God sees the big picture and it is with faith that we put our trust in the Lord's plan for us and his creation. We simply thank God for the gift Father Thomas Marshall was to us as we journeyed together toward the day of final encounter with the Lord, the giver of life and love.



*Father Thomas Francis Marshall*

*Lord,  
Giver of life and creator of all things,  
We thank you for the gift of  
Father Thomas Francis Marshall  
Who journeyed with us in this land.  
You have called him home;  
Give him joy and peace in  
Your Holy Presence forever.  
Amen*



*The Hills of Kerry, Ireland*