

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 3

Father John E Boll

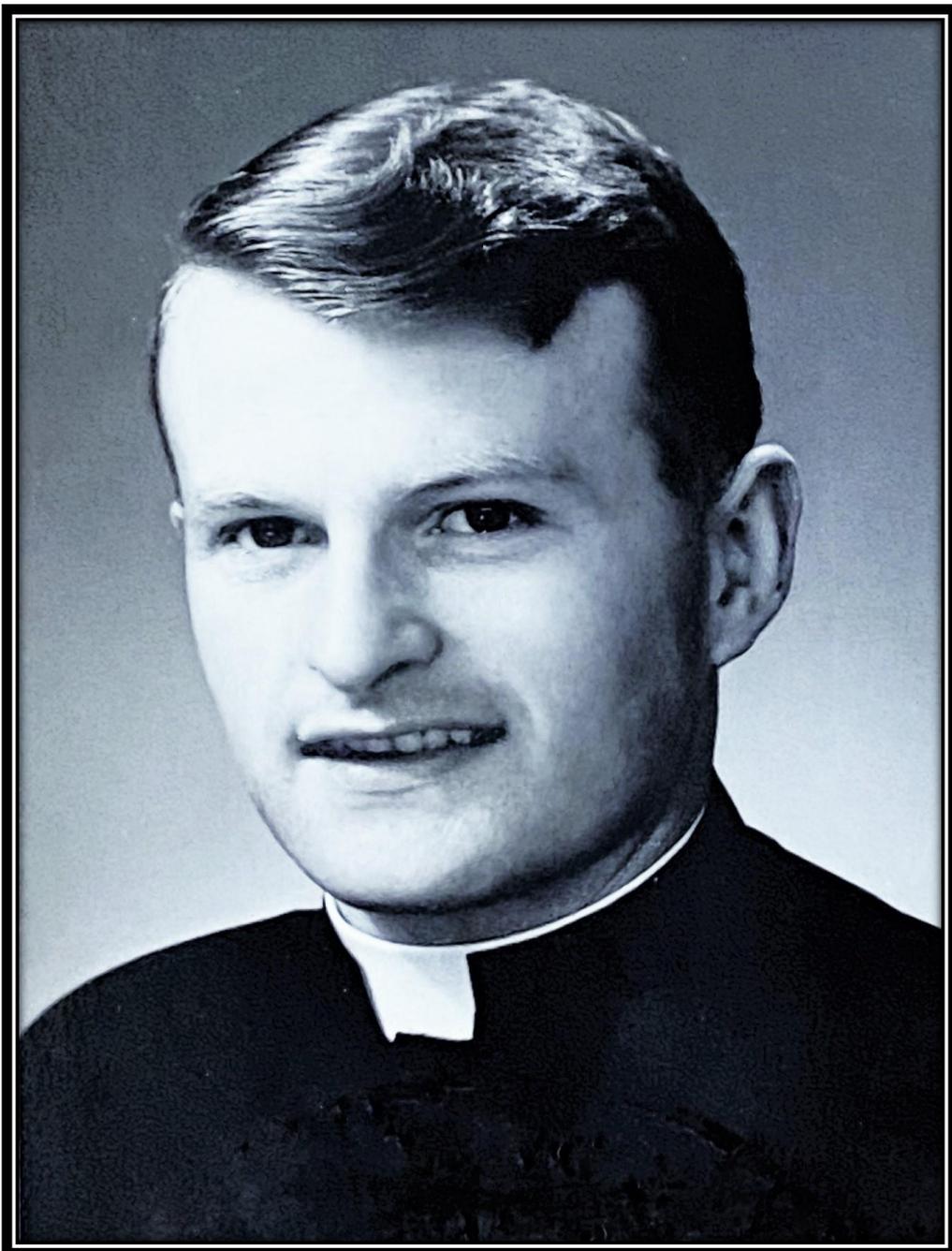
No 38

Father James Brendan Walsh

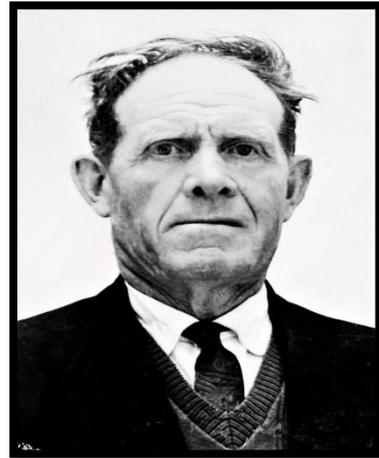
Native of Glen Cloghane, Castlegregory Parish, County Kerry, Ireland

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Holy Family Parish, Portola, California



James Brendan Walsh was born on January 12, 1941, the youngest of six children born to Thomas P Walsh and Ellen Dowd. The children of the family in order of birth are Patrick, Martin, Thomas, Bridie May, John and James. James was born in the family home on the farm at Glen Cloghane, on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland.



Photos Courtesy of Fr James Walsh

Thomas and Ellen Walsh, Father James' Parents

BEGINS HIS EDUCATION

James began his education at the age of four at the National School in Glen Cloghane. After attending this primary school for eight years, he began his five year secondary education in 1954 at Saint Brendan's College, Killarney, which was a diocesan secondary boarding school.

As he graduated from Saint Brendan's College in 1959, Monsignor Cornelius P Higgins, Chancellor of the Diocese of Sacramento, was in Ireland visiting his family and stopping at the various seminaries in Ireland. He made a visit to Saint Brendan's College in Kerry and Father John Moynihan, the President of the College, suggested that he contact James Walsh because he was interested in becoming a priest to serve in the missions.

Because so many Kerry men went to Sacramento to serve as priests, the Sacramento diocese was often called the "Little Kerry of the West." Monsignor Higgins met with James and encouraged him to come to Sacramento to serve as a priest. James eventually made the decision to study for Sacramento.

As far back that he can remember, James always wanted to be a priest so after completing his high school years at Saint Brendan's College, he transferred to All Hallows Missionary College, Dublin where he spent the next six years of study to prepare himself for ministry as a priest in Sacramento. He loved his time at All Hallows College saying, "Those were wonderful years, the glory of my life."

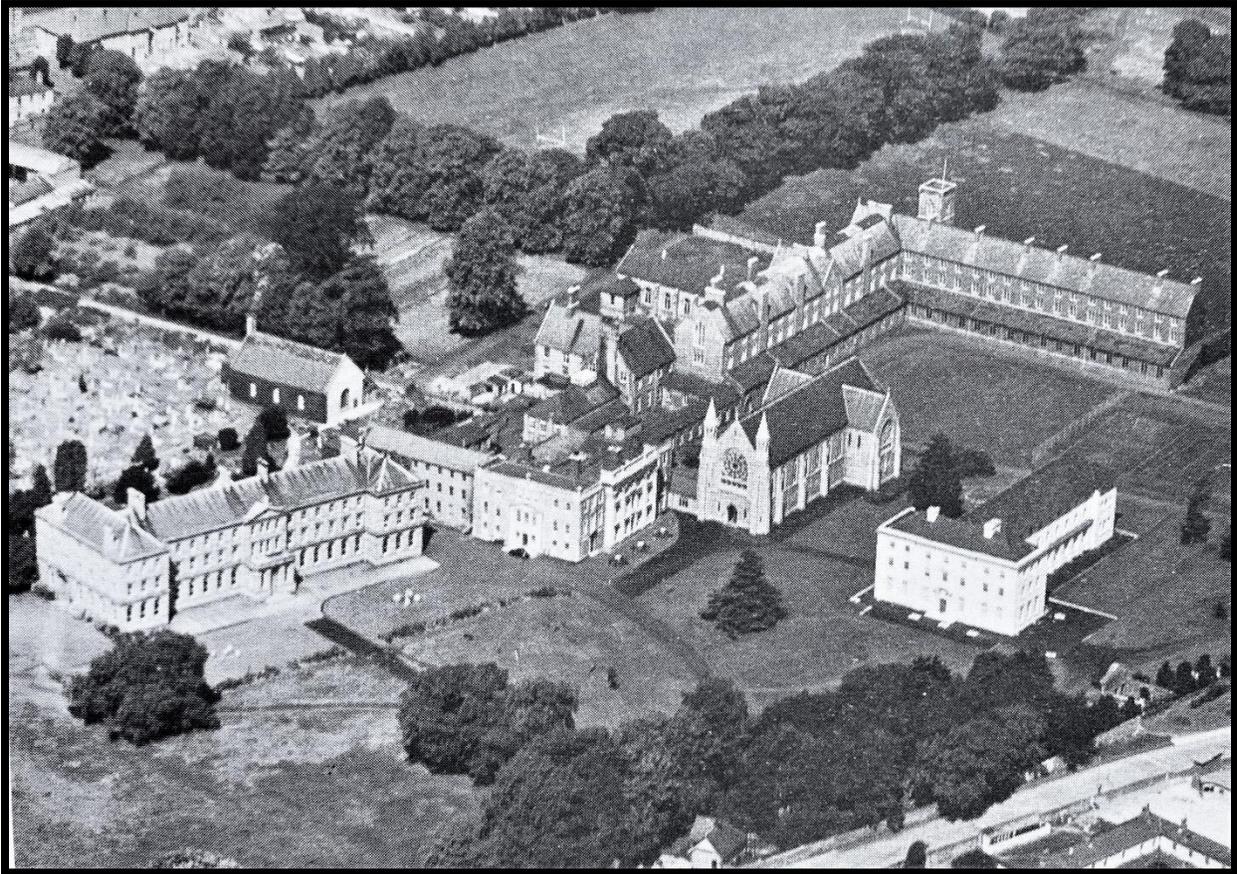


Photo courtesy of Fr James Walsh

All Hallows College, Dublin

STUDIES AT ALL HALLOWS MISSIONARY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

When Bishop Joseph McGucken visited Ireland, he stopped at All Hallows College and that was the first time James met the bishop of Sacramento. He decided to commit to Sacramento and not to Australia where his brother Patrick was serving. Father Patrick was ordained a priest in 1955 in the All Hallows' Seminary Chapel and James would be ordained a priest in the same chapel ten years later.

ORDAINED A PRIEST FOR THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

Upon completion of his theological studies at All Hallows Seminary, James was ordained a priest by Bishop Donal Herlihy, Bishop of Ferns, for the Diocese of Sacramento on June 20, 1965 with 29 other deacons in the class, 10 years after the ordination of his brother Patrick. Three of the thirty newly ordained priests that day were for service in the Diocese of Sacramento: Fathers James B Walsh, Kieran McMahon and Michael C McKeon.



Photos courtesy of Fr James Walsh

Ordination Day, June 20, 1965, All Hallows College Chapel, Dublin



Rose Window in All Hallows Seminary Chapel, Dublin



Photo courtesy of Fr Walsh

Father James Blesses his Parents on his Ordination Day



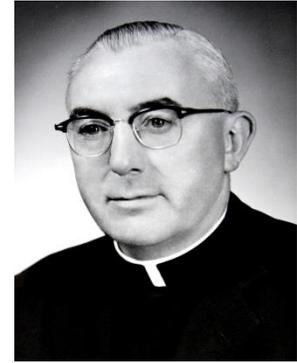
Courtesy of Fr Walsh

All Hallows Seminary Ordination Class of 1965

LEAVES IRELAND FOR THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

After his ordination, Father Walsh spent nearly three months with his family. In early September, he flew to New York City and then on to San Francisco. From San Francisco, he caught a flight to the Metropolitan Airport in South Sacramento. From the ordination class of 1965, there were eight priests ordained in Ireland for Sacramento that year. Monsignor Cornelius O'Connor met Fathers James Walsh and Michael McKeon at the Sacramento Airport and took them to All Hallows Parish where they stayed the night.

The next morning, all the newly arrived priests met at the Bishop's Office for orientation to the diocese. Bishop Alden J Bell, Bishop of Sacramento, was attending the last session of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, so Monsignor Higgins welcomed the eight new priests, talked with them about the diocese, gave them a tour of the diocesan offices, answered any questions, and then handed each priest his first assignment as a priest of the diocese.



Monsignor Higgins

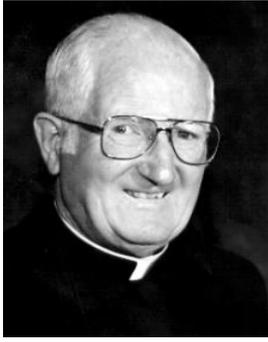
FIRST APPOINTMENT, SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

Father James' first appointment was to Saint Theresa Parish in South Lake Tahoe but for the first month he was assigned temporarily to Saint James Parish in Davis to facilitate a lateral transfer with Father Jerry Petrie who was assigned to South Lake Tahoe but was being reassigned to the Davis Newman Center. Father Walsh left Davis on October 2 to take up his assignment in South Lake Tahoe.



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Saint Theresa Church, South Lake Tahoe in 1965



Father John Grace

He remembers that it was a Saturday morning when he left Sacramento by Greyhound bus for South Lake Tahoe, arriving there at 1 PM. Father John Grace, pastor of Saint Theresa Parish, picked him up at the bus station and brought him to the parish. He told James he was to hear confessions at 4 PM and celebrate the Vigil Mass. Being at 6,000 feet elevation, Father James began to feel the effects of the high altitude with a shortness of breath.

When he arrived in the church for confessions at 4 PM, there was a line of people waiting for confessions to begin. Half-way through the confessions, Father James had to take a break and went outside to get some fresh air. After the Vigil Mass, he was ready for dinner and Mrs Lucille Ryan, the housekeeper, served a delicious meal that evening, the first of many.

MINISTRY IN SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

Father James was parochial vicar in South Lake Tahoe for five years. At first, he found it isolating at Lake Tahoe because he was far away from his priest friends. He made the trip to Sacramento as often as he could to visit them. But first he had to purchase a car because Father Grace told him the parish could not afford to buy a car for him. He purchased his first car, a Volkswagen, which he used the whole time he was assigned to South Lake Tahoe.



Photo by John E Boll

The Beauty of the Lake Tahoe Area

As he settled into parish life, Father James was put in charge of the parish religious education program and the parish youth group. He visited the parish school regularly and served as chaplain to the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart who staffed the school. He loved the snow in the winter and the glorious summer days in South Lake Tahoe.

Father James says Father Grace was a wonderful priest to be with in his first assignment. He was always kind and affirming, a man who lived his priesthood to the full. He had keen insight and great pastoral experience. He handled a snow plough like a professional in the winter and did all the parish maintenance work himself, saving the parish a great deal of expense.

ASSIGNED TO SAINT VINCENT PARISH, VALLEJO



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Vincent Parish, Vallejo

Father James was next appointed parochial vicar to Saint Vincent Parish and he was quite happy to go to Vallejo. Father Patrick O'Regan was the pastor, a true Kerryman as was Father Walsh, and they had much in common. Father Maurice O'Brien was the other parochial vicar who was the right hand man for Father O'Regan, always reliable and ready to go the extra mile.

On the parish site was the all-girls Saint Vincent Ferrer High School under the leadership of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael. The parochial vicars of the parish visited the classrooms regularly to speak with the students about theological and moral topics pertaining to their age group. It was from this positive experience that Father Walsh developed a desire for teaching at this level. He found it to be a challenging and meaningful ministry which he enjoyed.

TEACHING AT SAINT FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL

On September 1, 1972, Father Walsh was appointed to teach at Saint Francis High School with his residence at Saint Robert Parish. He remained in this position for only six months because he found himself longing to return to parish ministry. He stepped down from his teach position at Saint Francis High School on March 13, 1973 and was succeeded by Father Gerald Ryle.

HOLY SPIRIT PARISH, FAIRFIELD



Photo by John E Boll

Holy Spirit Church, Fairfield

On March 13, 1973, Father Walsh was assigned to Holy Spirit Parish in Fairfield as parochial vicar to Father James Vaughn who was pastor. He succeeded Father Liam macCarthy who was assigned to Roseville. Father Patrick Lee was the other parochial vicar in the parish.

Father James says he has many happy memories of his years in Fairfield with three pastors. Succeeding Father Vaughn in Fairfield was Father William Broderick who had previously been a Catholic Chaplain in Viet Nam. Father Pat Lannigan took over the parish and successfully guided the parish through a fund drive to build a new parish hall.

He became friends with the Sisters of the Holy Faith who ran the parish school and were totally involved in the parish. These sisters were outstanding religious sisters and educators. Most of them were from Glasneven Convent in Dublin Ireland.

MAT PROGRAM

During this time in the early 1970s, Father Walsh participated in the joint Diocesan-USF sponsored MAT program for priests and religious sisters of the diocese. The students were challenged and exposed to the cross currents of thought and new ideas in the years after the Second Vatican Council. In 1973, the priests and sisters who participated in the program received their Master's in the Art of Teaching religion (MAT).

SAINT ROBERT PARISH, SACRAMENTO

Returning to Sacramento in September 1978, Father Walsh was assigned as parochial vicar of Saint Robert Parish for the next two years with Monsignor Hugh McTague who was pastor.

As parochial vicar, Father James celebrated the Eucharist with the community, visited the parish school, and helped with many parish ministries.

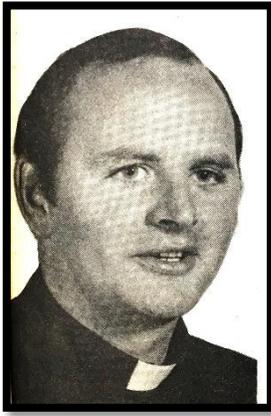


Photo by John E Boll

Saint Robert Church, Sacramento

A TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE

While Father Walsh was living in residence at Saint Robert's Rectory and teaching at Saint Francis High School, he remembers the weekend of the annual Parish Festival. That Sunday evening, a group of priests gathered at the rectory for dinner. Outside the rectory was a thief lying in wait for the right moment. When Father Patrick Lee left the rectory to return to his parish in Fairfield, the thief made his move. He grabbed Father Lee and with a gun pointed to his head, entered the rectory and demanded all the money in the safe.



Father John Cuffe, the parochial vicar of the parish, nervously opened the safe. The festival money had already been banked except for some bags of coins. The gunman grabbed the money bags without realizing that the bag containing pennies had a hole in the bottom and as the thief carried out the bags of coins, pennies began to drop out through the hole in the bag as he walked toward his house not far from the rectory.

As the thief left the rectory, he released Father Lee and one of the priests immediately called the police who rushed to the rectory. Upon arrival, the police noticed a trail of pennies and followed it to thief's house where they arrested him.

This was a traumatic event for all involved, and one of the priests in the rectory that Sunday night not long after was afflicted with Bell's palsy causing facial paralysis. The shock of the robbery no doubt contributed to this sudden paralysis.

FIRST PASTORATE, SAINT JOSPEH PARISH, REDDING

In the fall of 1980, newly installed Bishop Francis Quinn appointed Father Walsh to his first pastorate at Saint Joseph Parish in Redding, succeeding Monsignor John P O'Connor who had been pastor of Redding for 41 years. When Monsignor O'Connor retired, he decided to continue living in the rectory. Today, it is diocesan policy that a retiring pastor may not live in the rectory from which he retires. After one year, he decided to leave the parish and take a new assignment.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Joseph Church, Redding

ADMINISTRATOR OF IONE

As Father Walsh left Redding, Bishop Quinn asked him to fill in at Sacred Heart Parish in Ione as administrator of the parish while Father Chris Neary was dealing with cancer. Father Walsh began his time in Ione on October 2, 1981 and remained there until July 27, 1982 when Father Neary returned to the parish.

SABBATICAL IN ISRAEL

Having served in ministry for over fifteen years, Father James Walsh requested to take his first sabbatical. The sabbatical was sponsored by CTU in Chicago and the group consisted of about twenty priests and religious sisters from around the English speaking world. As they traveled from the United States to Israel, the first stop was Athens, Greece where they spent a week visiting the sites where Saint Paul preached the Gospel of Christ.

The group then moved on to Israel where they took up residence in the small town of Ein Karem, living in a wing of the Franciscan Monastery. The monastery chapel marks the birthplace of John the Baptist who was born in Ein Karem and grew into adulthood. It was there that the Visitation of Mary with Elizabeth took place.

The brilliant Scripture Scholar Father Carroll Stuhmueller, CP was the director of the program and one of the lecturers. Father James greatly admired and respected the scholarship and humility of this renowned Passionist priest scholar whose knowledge and delivery of the Word of God was impressive and inspiring in the very land where so much of the content of the Bible had unfolded.

Father Carroll Stuhmueller, CP

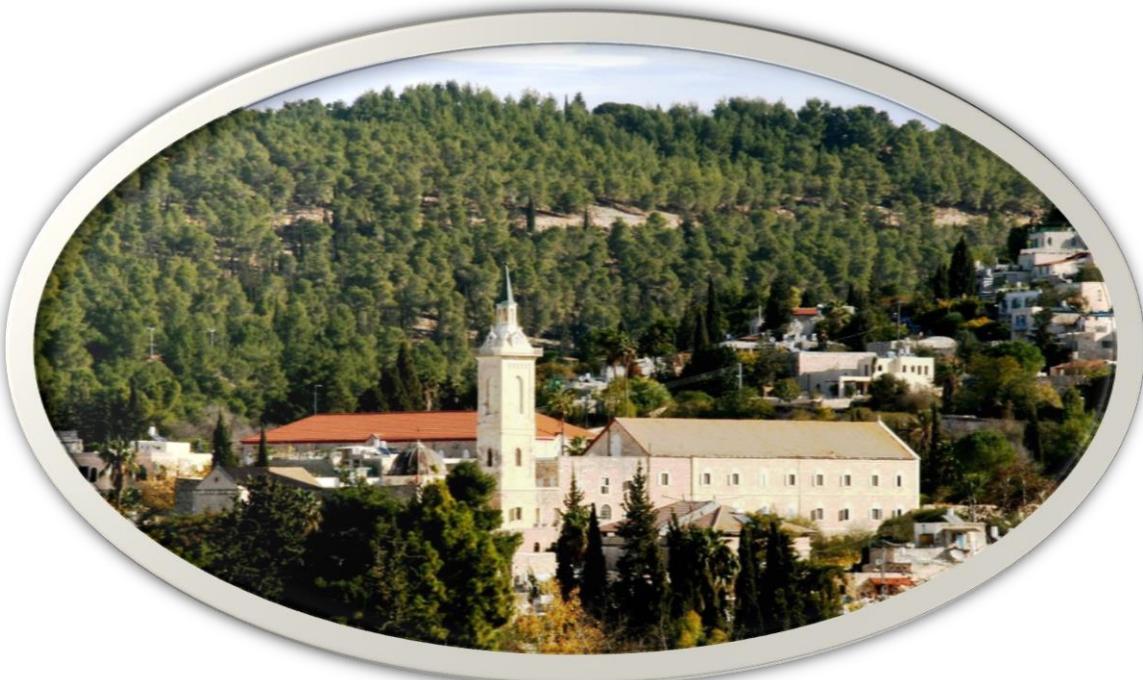


Photo by John E Boll

Franciscan Monastery in Ein Karem where Father Walsh lived during his Sabbatical

Photos courtesy of Fr James Walsh



A Boat Ride on the Lake of Galilee



A Visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem

PASTOR OF SAINT ANTHONY PARISH, WALNUT GROVE

Returning from his sabbatical in the Holy Land, Bishop Francis Quinn appointed Father Walsh pastor of Saint Anthony Parish in Walnut Grove on October 31, 1983. This was an ideal parish for him since Walnut Grove was a smaller parish along the Sacramento River. It gave him time to refocus his pastoral commitment to the Catholic community in the Sacramento Delta.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Anthony Church, Walnut Grove

After serving as pastor of Saint Anthony Parish for four years, Father Walsh was given a new appointment as Catholic chaplain of the new Sacramento State Prison in Folsom in August 1987.

SACRAMENTO STATE PRISON, FOLSOM

Father Walsh was appointed chaplain of the new Sacramento State Prison in Folsom. Father Denis Keany was Catholic chaplain at the Old Folsom Prison and Father Walsh became the founding Catholic chaplain in the new prison next door. His duties were to set up the chapel, identify Catholics in the prison population, and organize Masses for the prisoners. He also had to create other programs for the growth and enrichment of the prison population.

Father Walsh says he very much enjoyed his ministry at Folsom State Prison because it was a challenge working with inmates and it provided for a while some relief from the

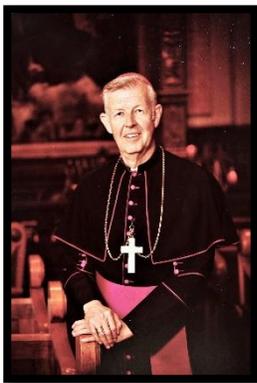
more organized ministries of a parish. He served as prison chaplain in Folsom for three years, from August 3, 1987 to February 28, 1990.



Photo from California State Prison, Folsom Website

The New California State Prison in Folsom, CA

PASTOR OF PARADISE



Bishop Francis Quinn

On March 1, 1990, Bishop Francis Quinn appointed Father Walsh pastor of Saint Thomas More Parish in Paradise. He succeeded Father Simon Twomey who had done an excellent job in building up the parish community and built a new parish church. When Father James arrived, most of the building debt had been repaid and in short order, he completed paying off the remaining balance of the debt.

Saint Thomas More Parish had a thriving parish school with 150 students at the time and Father Walsh worked closely with Colleen Waugh who was principal. Father James' experience at this parish was very positive during his four years as pastor of Saint Thomas Parish.



Photo by John E Boll

Saint Thomas More Church, Paradise

PASTOR OF SAINT MARY PARISH, VACAVILLE



Photo by Cathy Joyce

Saint Mary Church, Vacaville

In August of 1994, Father Walsh was named pastor of Saint Mary Parish in Vacaville and he was very happy to be back in Solano County. Father Eugenio Lopez-Restrepo was the parochial vicar who was responsible for the Hispanic religious education program for young Hispanics and the Spanish liturgies. Father Brent Nall transferred from the parish after one year to become chaplain at Mercy-Methodist Hospital in South Sacramento.

In 1996 when the new prison in Susanville opened, since Father Walsh had experience in setting up a program for the New Folsom State Prison some years earlier, he was considered a good fit for the chaplaincy position at High Desert State Prison. He says he never expected to be back behind bars so soon as the Catholic chaplain. So after only a little more than one year at Saint Mary Parish, he left the parish on January 1, 1996 to begin work the next day at High Desert State Prison as the founding Catholic Chaplain at this new prison.

HIGH DESERT PRISON, SUSANVILLE

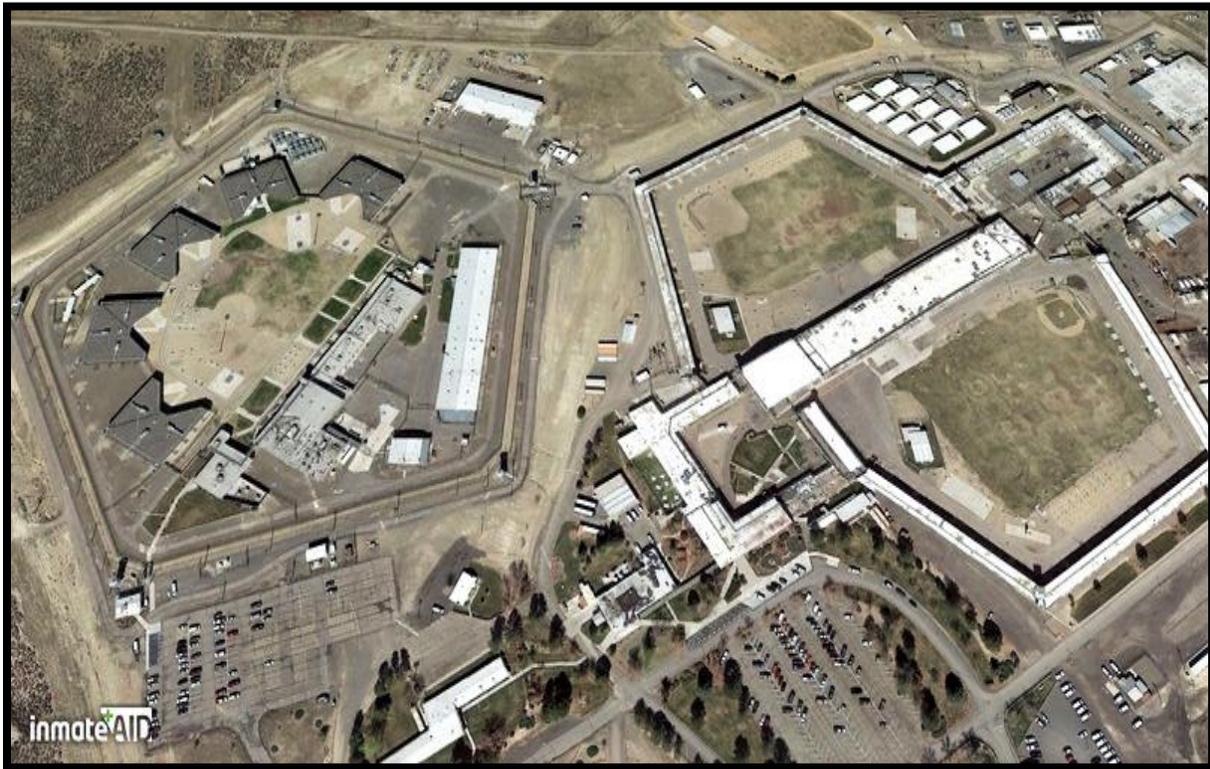
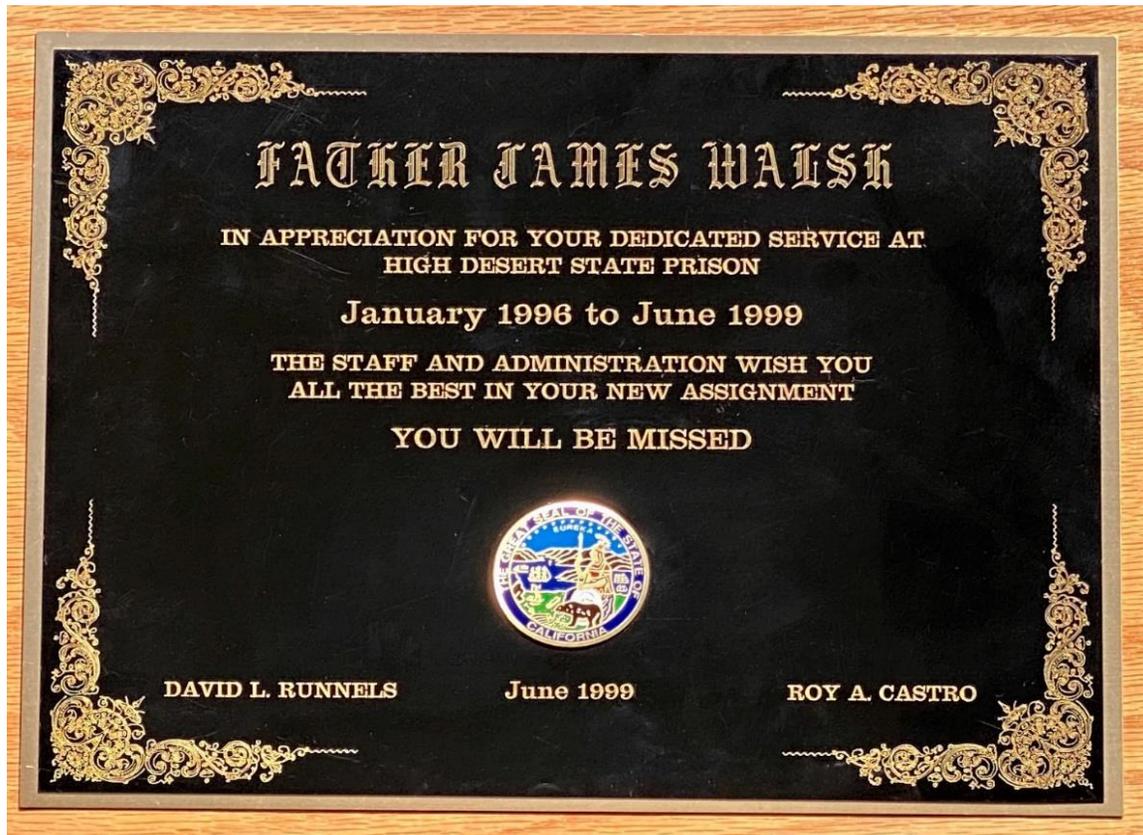


Photo from High Desert Prison Website

California High Desert State Prison, Susanville

This prison was a maximum security Level IV Prison with a sprawling campus. The prison was divided into five units with some of those units sub-divided to keep the gangs apart. The lockdown units were demanding because of the religious and social needs of the inhabitants. These subdivided units housed Level IV inmates. High Desert Prison was two miles in circumference and had its own hospital.



Father Walsh Honored by High Desert State Prison

OUR LADY OF GRACE, WEST SACRAMENTO

Father Walsh was next appointed pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento on June 15, 1999 when he succeeded Father Ned O'Hara who served as pastor for five years. Father O'Hara retired and returned to Ireland where he lived the rest of his life. The parish school was a couple miles from the parish church and Sister Michael Moulin, DHS, was the principal of the thriving school with a student body of 200. Father James' experience in West Sacramento was a very positive one for him.

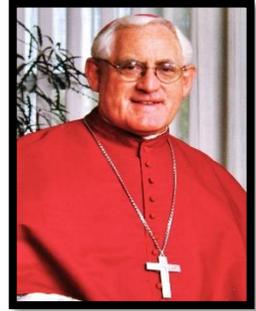


Photo by John E Boll

Our Lady of Grace Church, West Sacramento

HOLY FAMILY PARISH, PORTOLA

For his final assignment, Father Walsh wanted to return to the mountains one more time and on September 30, 2004, Bishop William Weigand appointed him as pastor of Holy Family Parish in Portola with its mission church of Holy Rosary in Loyalton about a half hour's drive east of Portola.



The parishioners of Our Lady of Grace Parish in West Sacramento helped Father James to make the move. He says, "They were absolutely fantastic in accomplishing the task, not that they were in a hurry to see me off and away. In fact, they were mourning. In a very short time, a whole busload of them arrived in Loyalton for Mass one Sunday morning and the parishioners of Loyalton welcomed them warmly, giving them lunch and refreshments for their return trip back to West Sacramento.

The Portola parish was wonderful and Father James thoroughly enjoyed being back in the high Sierras. The winters were cold and sometimes the roads were dangerous but the people were wonderful. In the summertime, he celebrated an outdoor Mass on Saturday afternoons at the Grey Eagle camp ground.

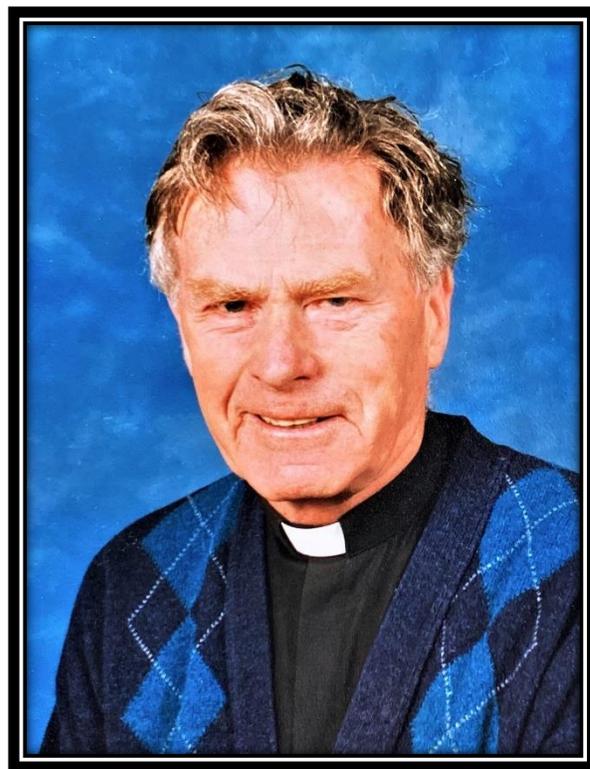
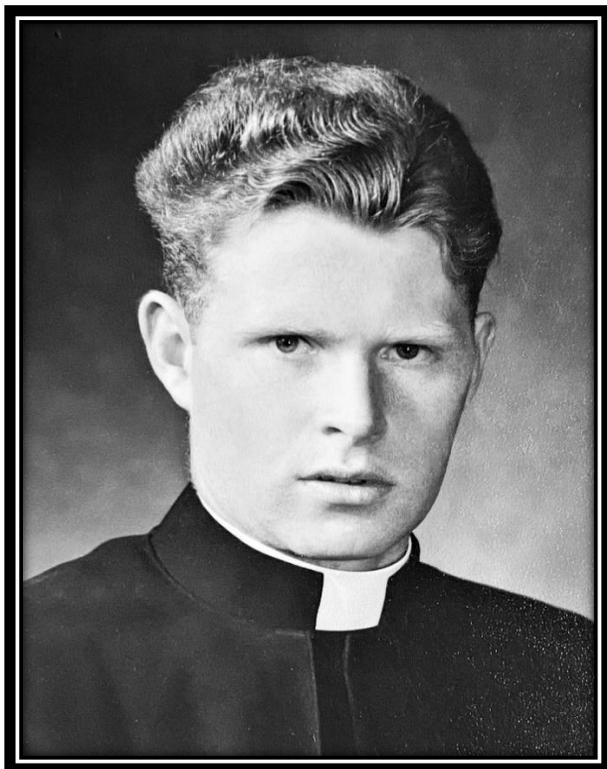


Photo by John E Boll

Holy Family Church, Portola

FATHER PATRICK WALSH BECOMES ILL

Father James' eldest brother Patrick who was ordained a priest in 1955 for the Diocese of Sale near Melbourne, Australia, became ill with Alzheimer's disease. He celebrated his Golden Jubilee in Ireland and wanted to stay but had to return to Australia where he could receive care through his diocese. He began therapy in 2005 but his condition steadily grew worse and he had to be permanently hospitalized. He died in January 6, 2008 and Father James flew to Australia to celebrate Father Patrick's Funeral Mass. He was laid to rest in the parish cemetery of Saint Joseph, Korumburra, Australia where he had served as Parish Priest from 1977 to 2004.



Father Patrick John Walsh



RESIDENCE AT THE PRIESTS' VILLAGE IN CITRUS HEIGHTS

Father Walsh now lives at the Vianney Priests' Village in Citrus Heights and has been actively engaged in ministry at many parishes throughout the diocese. He enjoys filling in for brother priests when they go on vacation or take a sabbatical as he did many years before.



Photo by John E Boll

Father James' Residence, Vianney Priests' Village, Citrus Heights

Photographs of Father Walsh's Journey

Courtesy of Father James Walsh



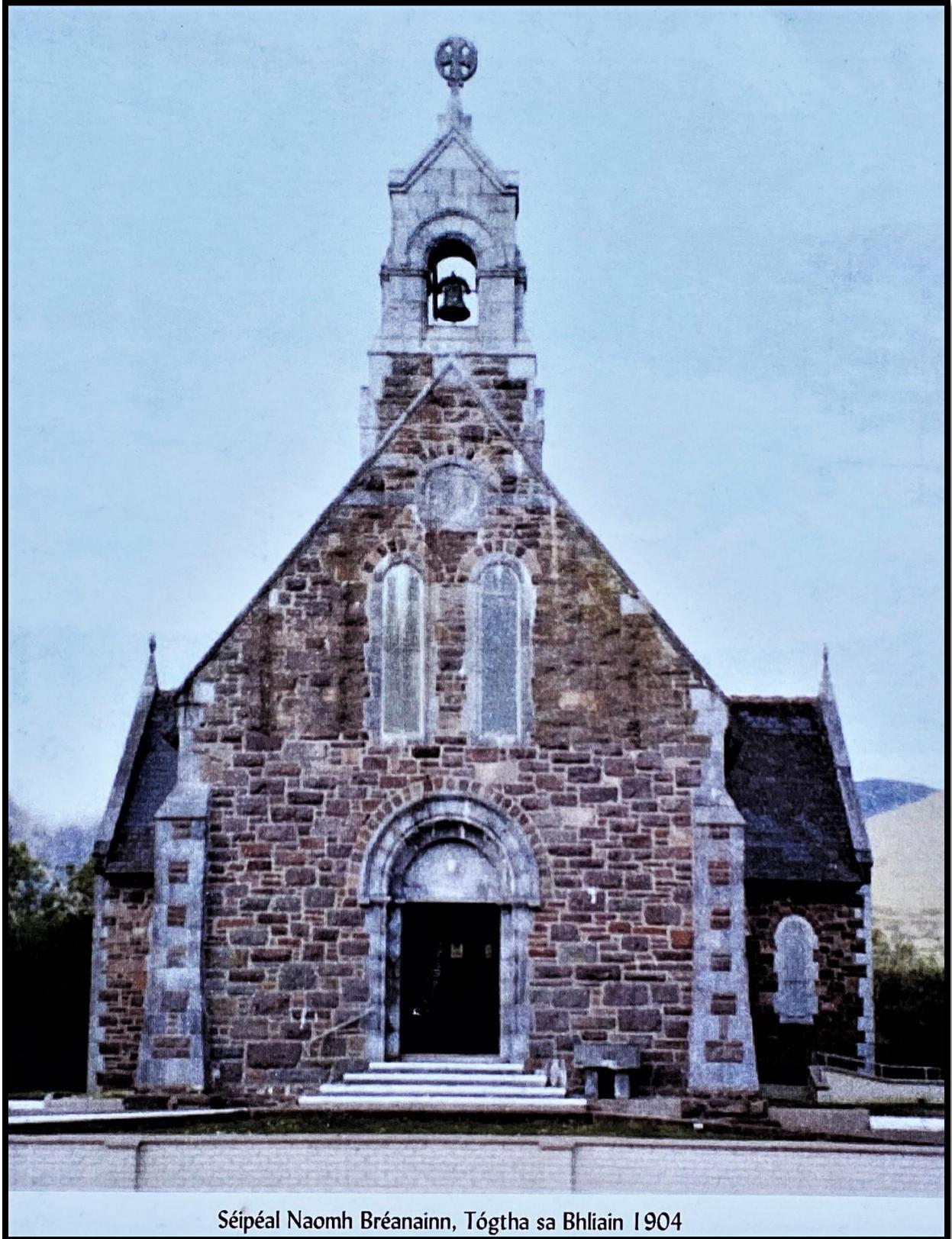
FOUR! Father James Plays Golf in Castlegregory with his Brother Tom



Martin, Father James, Bridie May and Jack



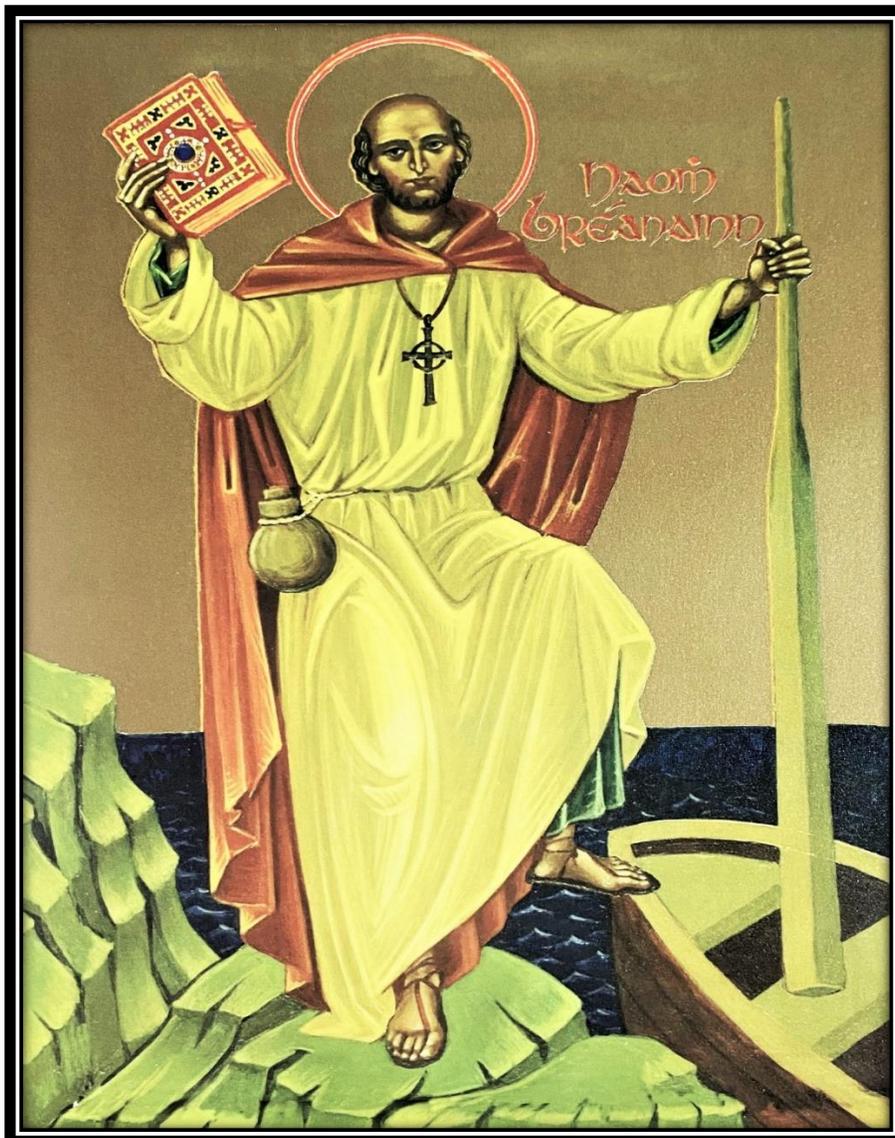
Martin, Father James' Deceased Brother, Kept the Home Fire Burning



Séipéal Naomh Bréanainn, Tógtha sa Bhliain 1904

Saint Brendan Church, Cloghane

Father James was baptized, received First Communion and celebrated his First Mass in his Old Parish Church



Saint Brendan

BISHOP JOSEPH CASSIDY OF CLONFERT

Bishop Cassidy of Clonfert wrote the following about Saint Brendan: "Kerry gave him birth, Clonfert gave him burial. In between he enriched us both. He was the most ubiquitous of men...his adventurous journey was totally in keeping with his character. In his total commitment to Christ, he was another, indeed a Celtic St. Paul..."

"Of its very nature the Church is dynamic, expansive, explosive. It should be like an attacking half-back from Kerry charging through the field...like Christ, its risen founder, bursting the walls of the tomb."

"Pobal De, the people of God, are not passive. They give their children the eternal benefit of their beliefs... For Brendan, life was a voyage...not a drift. Pray for the appreciation of faith, for the renewal of conviction...may Brendan's missionary zeal continue to inspire the destinies of the ancient dioceses of Kerry and Clonfert."



Father James Brendan Walsh