

HISTORY OF ST. ISIDORE'S PARISH

In 1849, the days of the Gold Rush, Catholic priests accompanied the pioneer settlers of Sutter and Yuba Counties and by 1852 three missionaries were working in the area. The first Catholic church was begun by Father Peter Magonotta, member of the Passionist Fathers, and dedicated March 20, 1853 and much of the actual construction was done by immigrants, mostly Irish and German men, who had come here to make their living.

Later on there was no real need for a Catholic church in Yuba City, so no services were offered here. Catholics came into Marysville to attend Mass and most of them settled around the Hub city if their children were to attend parochial school. The convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur for elementary children and high school girls was founded in 1856, in the City of Marysville. Up until about 1940, St. Joseph's church offered only two Sunday Masses with Sunday school for rural children held between services.

Father Bernard McElwee came to the Marysville-Yuba City area January 1st, 1935, taking his first assignment after completion of studies at All Hallows College in Ireland. He was assistant to the late Monsignors Patrick Guerin and Thomas E. Horgan, and in 1941 another assistant was added. Soon the increasing population required four regular Masses each Sunday and a third cleric was added to the two-county parish in 1942.

Actually, the first services of record in Yuba City were held about 1943 during the Spring months at the Hauss-Steel ranch on Garden Highway. That building was demolished in the flood of 1955 and replaced now by the Butler building. Mass was later offered at what is now the Richland Housing Center where Mexican Nationals, here to relieve the farm labor shortage, were housed; most of these men were of the Catholic faith. Shortly thereafter, Mass was offered south of Yuba City in ranch camps that housed convict labor also brought here for farm work. Religious classes were held in the cafeteria of the California Packing Corporation plant in Yuba City. With the growth of what was then Camp Beale, and

the influx of workers to aid new local industries, the need for more religious help became apparent.

When Fr. McElwee was stationed at Marysville in 1935, the City of Yuba City reached west only to Cooper Avenue; the high school was the main southern boundary and a small settlement along the Live Oak Highway was the only real residential development north of town. Outside of these limits were mostly orchards and vacant lots. But with the growth and expansion that was taking place during the early years of the war, Yuba City started pushing further in every direction of the compass. The official population of 1930 was 3,605; and by 1940 it had increased to 4,968, and it was obvious that something had to be done in Sutter County. Until 1952 the county was one of only three counties in the State which did not contain a Catholic parish. So, on November 15, 1952, St. Isidore's Parish was formed as part of the Sacramento Diocese, and Fr. McElwee was appointed first Pastor. What is now our "Parish Hall" was the first St. Isidore's Church, blessed by the late Bishop Robert J. Armstrong. It was a former wartime Camp Beale chapel and was located on Cooper Avenue where the Baptist church now stands.

On March 9, 1953 the "Gray" property was purchased for the new parish plant and the church building was moved from Cooper Avenue to its present site. In November of that year the first fund-raising campaign for twelve classrooms was started. On August 15, 1955 the first Sisters of Notre Dame for Holy Angels School arrived, the first principal being Sister Francis Julie. When Sister left in 1958, our principal was Sister Veronica, followed by Sr. Julie Carmel; Sr. Joann; Sr. Barbara; Sr. Mary Florence; and Sr. Jacinta Martinez is the principal at present. In September 1955, Holy Angels School opened and the Sisters, not yet having a Convent on the property, commuted to Marysville Convent. In December, on Christmas Eve, the Feather River went on a rampage, the levee broke, and much of Sutter County was flooded. The school had about twelve feet of water flowing through it, as did the old church, causing about \$20,000 damage. While repairs were being made to the church, Mass was offered at the Chapel of Twin Cities and the Yuba-Sutter Fairground.

In May of 1958, Bishop Joseph T. McGucken, then of the Sacramento Diocese, dedicated the Convent; and the first graduating class from Holy Angels School received their diplomas in June. On June 17, 1959 the ground was broken for our new church, which was to seat 800, compared to the 200 in the old church. On June 12, 1960 the new church was dedicated by Bishop McGucken and on March 15, 1963 the parish house was completed.

It is difficult to put into words all that happens in a parish over the years. So many parishioners work very hard to help the Pastor accomplish what he can for the good of all, both spiritually and physically. In the earliest years, Father McElwee had temporary assistants, some Irish, some Mexican, and an Englishman or two; but it wasn't until 1955 that he had his first permanent assistant, Fr. Eugene G. Lucas, who stayed for three years and is now pastor of Winters parish. Then came Fr. James Church, Fr. Enda

Maguire, Fr. Arnold Meagher, Fr. Charles Quinn, Fr. Tobias Vereker, Fr. Daniel Casey, Fr. Joseph Bishop, Fr. James McKnight and Fr. Michael O'Keeffe. We've had many Mexican padres, the first of whom was Fr. Pacifico Chirinos, a Franciscan Father, to minister especially to the hundreds of Mexican families in the parish.

Fr. McElwee chose the name of the parish for the patron saint of farmers, or as the Mexican people say, San Isidro Labrador (laborer). The patron saints of the Sacramento Diocese are St. Patrick and St. Joseph and we have included our Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The ministry of the Sacraments, the celebration of the Mass, the burials, all the prayers that have been offered in our church, we have returned to God, through our patron saints, in thanksgiving for the good things He has done for us in this parish over the years, indeed from the time of the '49ers.



DINNER FOR PARISH FUND-RAISERS, 1953



LABORERS IN OUR VINEYARD

SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME
Who have staffed our school

Sr. Janet Haggerty
Sr. Kathleen McMullen,
Sr. Denis Marie,
Sr. Audrey McGreevy
Sr. Mary Florence*
Sr. Barbara Hamm*
Sr. Sean
Sr. Joann*
Sr. Ann Veronica
Sr. Mary Joel
Sr. Ann Joachim
Sr. John Francis
Sr. Teresa Ann
Sr. Carmelita of St. Teresa
Sr. Carmela
Sr. Stephanie
Sr. Mary Laura
Sr. Mary William
Sr. Mary Sebastian
Sr. Julie Carmel*

Sr. Agnes Jerome
Sr. Vincent de Paul
Sr. Margaret Claire*
Sr. Bernadette Julie
Sr. Veronica*
Sr. Madeline Marie
Sr. Mary Daniel
Sr. James Marie
Sr. Mary Richard
Sr. Helene
Sr. Thomas Julie
Sr. Mary Stanislaus
Sr. Melita
Sr. Patrick
Sr. Janet
Sr. Catherine
Sr. Maureen
Sr. Jacinta*

* Denotes Principal



PAST PRESIDENTS Mothers Guild

Virginai Stonkus
Claire Ramey
Esther Limper
Alice Andreason
Gayle Heckman
Mary Rakela
Yolanda McNally
Lois Yaklich
Paulina Goodall
Joanne Silcott
Gwen Knaebel
Wanda Gerken
Sharon Souza
Beverly Perez
Peggy Steel
Diane Kauk
Lila Morley

DAD'S CLUB

John Loew
Del Morehead
John Goodall
Hal McNally
Red Murphy
Walt Berg
George Linteo
John McCarthy
Ed Wood
Frank Masera
Abe Leal
Mike Jordan
Paul Chesini
Bob Eckhardt
John Weston

CHAIRMEN OF OUR FIRST FUND DRIVE, 1953

Roy Van Tiger
John L. Sullivan
Kenneth Berg
Judge Arthur Coats,
John Goodall
Leo Gunther
Earl Huffmaster
T.C. Limper
William McHugh
Alfred Montna
James Oakham
Dr. J.J. Salopek
Joe Schmidl
Richard Shannon
C.E. Sullivan
Mrs. Vincent Berry

