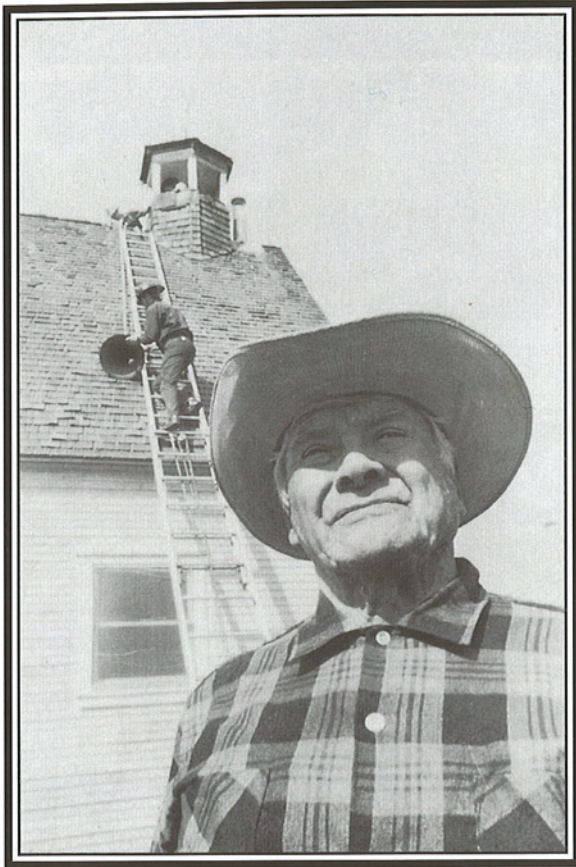


St. Rose of Lima



Simi Valley, California
1921-1996

Our Heritage



Tommy Rodriguez overseeing the installation of the new bell in 1916

What did the Portola Serra expedition of 1769 see when they crested the Santa Susana Hills traveling from Mission San Gabriel to the Buena Ventura Mission? Did they stand in awe and reverence viewing this beautiful valley of Simi? What did they think as they saw tendrils of smoke curling skyward from the camps of the Chumash Indian villages along the arroyo Simi?

In 1795 Santiago Pico passed through the valley with an expedition. He then purchased the Spanish Land Grant for El Rancho Simi with its vast acreage reaching beyond the boundaries of Simi Valley. Early baptismal records of 1797 through 1799 at the San Fernando Mission list Santiago Pico as a Godfather. In 1842 Don Jose de la Guerra purchased the land from the Pico family. An influx of Americans began in the 1870's and in the late 1880's. The Strathearn family purchased the Rancho Simi. A Simi Colony began in the 1890's. The Simi Valley Historical Park is the current home of one of the original Colony houses in addition to the Guerra Adobe and the Strathearn House. The cross on Mt. McCoy told travelers there was a ranchero nearby to offer hospitality. It stands there today inviting us to lift up our minds and hearts to God.

The Catholic people of Simi Valley traveled to Santa Clara Church in Oxnard for baptisms and marriages. The roads were muddy in winter and dusty in

summer. They crossed the creek twice before they passed through "Little Simi" (Moorpark). Some of the people traveled over the mountain pass to San Fernando Mission. St. Rose became a mission church of the Santa Clara Church of Oxnard. There is an entry in the diary of Juan Camarillo dated Sunday, June 19, 1910 which reads: "Roberto and I left very early for Simi in the buggy. The Mass was said in the old Presbyterian Church and it was just crowded to the door. I acted as usher, and Roberto served for Father Laubacher. The choir did themselves proud today." The diocese of Monterey-Los Angeles had purchased the Presbyterian Church at Third and Pacific. It was blessed by Bishop Thomas J. Conaty on June 22, 1913. Reverend Laubacher served as the parish priest. A parishioner, Tommy Rodriguez, built three benches for the chapel. Then more were added until the chapel seated 60 people.

Parishioners purchased the statues of the Blessed Mother, Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Nativity Scene. A bell was donated in 1916 by Mr. and Mrs. Ferrer in thanksgiving. Mrs. Ferrer prayed for her husband's life to be spared, and in return, she donated a bell to the church. The bell called the people to worship, tolled for the dead and summoned firefighters to their posts. The bell was removed from the church in 1973 and given to Mrs. Lucy Chavez, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ferrer.

In 1921 St. Rose of Lima was designated as a parish church. It would serve the area of Simi, Santa Susana, and Moorpark. A rectory was built adjacent to the church in 1922, and Reverend Philip Genest became the resident pastor. The community of Simi Valley was as one family. The Protestant and Catholic churches served as gathering places for the people to join together to socialize and celebrate. A favorite outing for the parishioners was to the beach at Oxnard's "Hollywood by the Sea."



Original St. Rose of Lima Church at Pacific and Third

In 1928 Holy Cross of Moorpark bought property and erected a mission church. In 1929 the people of St. Rose were able to bring three nuns from Mexico to prepare the children for First Communion. Lucy (Ferrer) Chavez recalls assisting the sisters. Most of the families in the parish were of Mexican descent. A pump organ was acquired in the early 1930's to accompany the choir at the Sunday Mass. In 1933 an Altar Society was formed to clean the church, decorate the altar, and furnish the linens and vestments. A woman parishioner, Mrs. Anne Schrieber, was given permission by the diocese to care for the chalices and cibora. It was no easy task to keep the church clean when the dusty winds whipped across open fields.

The parish continued to grow, and in 1940 an addition to the church increased seating capacity to 160. The 1940 Census lists 152 registered families. At this



Celebrating Mass at St. Rose of Lima in the 1930's



First Communion Class of 1929

time sixty-three children received their First Communion, nine marriages were performed, 144 children were enrolled in catechism and six converts were under instruction.

During World War II Mexican laborers were housed at the Tapo Citrus camp. Mr. Steve Carrillo recalls going to the camp to assist at Mass offered there. Some of the Mexican laborers remained in Simi Valley, married and have their families here today. The parish continued to grow and soon the church overflowed. Parishioners sat outside on benches or stood under the trees to hear the Mass over loudspeakers. Children called this their "drive-in" church when they saw parishioners sitting in their cars listening to the Mass. Parents were assisted in teaching their children and preparing them for receiving the sacraments by Mr. and Mrs. Geneau. They taught in the homes and garages of parishioners. The parish priest instructed the converts joining the church and trained the altar boys. On

August 28, 1949 the parish had its first bazaar and barbecue. Father James Glennon was pastor.

The population of Simi Valley continued to grow. Families came attracted to the rural atmosphere, affordable housing, and seeking the wide open spaces. In 1955 there were three Sunday Masses at St. Rose. In 1958 Father Patrick McDonough was appointed pastor and soon realized that the old church could not accommodate the growing community of Simi Valley. He and the parishioners began planning, pledged their support, and started fund-raising for a new church, school, parish hall, convent and rectory. By September 1962 there were 634 families. There were five Sunday Masses at St. Rose and two at Moorpark. Our first assistant priest, Reverend Michael Slattery, ordained in Ireland, was appointed to St. Rose on August 4, 1962.



Parish children of the 1930's on an outing to Oxnard's "Hollywood by the Sea."



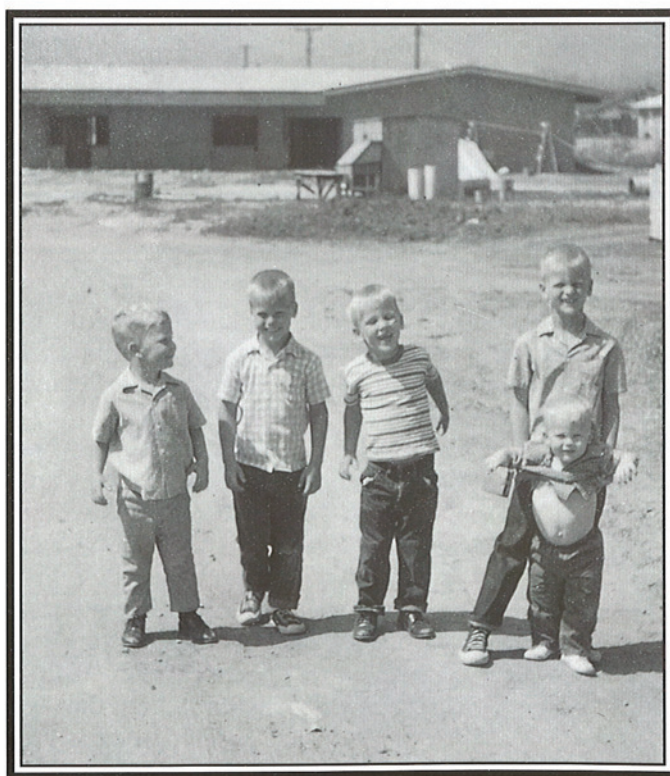
The new St. Rose of Lima Church in 1964

confirmed by Bishop John Ward on March 5, 1965 with 265 students. The new tabernacle, candelabra, and altar rail gates were in place and the church was only awaiting the arrival of the new windows to complete the sanctuary.

The rectory was started in October, 1965 and completed in 1966. Katie Haas and Anna Kuntz continued to serve the priests as housekeepers with Mike Ternosky as custodian. The annual Fourth of July celebration was the big event of the year. It was a family fun day and important fund-raiser. A local celebrity and Holy Cross parishioner, Walter Brennan, liked to attend and promote the event. The community continued to mushroom, growing from a population of 8,100 in 1960 to 48,000 in 1967. It was necessary to add a 5:00 p.m. evening mass to the Sunday schedule. On May 27, 1967 Bishop Manning, later Cardinal Manning, confirmed a record number of 438 students at two services, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. On June 16, 1968 Cardinal James Francis McIntyre dedicated the church and school. Father McDonough was the celebrant of the Solemn Mass of dedication, Father James O'Reilly of Mount St. Mary's College delivered the homily and assistants were Fathers Martin McGovern, Thomas Greeney, John Hughes, and Michael Condon. The continuous band of stained glass windows were in place on the curved wall of the sanctuary.

On September 21, 1962 authorization was received to build a new parish facility. The children were taught their catechism and prepared for the sacraments by Victory Knoll Sisters and parent volunteers. They continued to meet in homes and garages.

On Sunday, January 5, 1964 after the noon mass, ground was broken for the new church and school. The school opened on September 14, 1964 to 213 students and was staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame and one lay teacher, Mrs. David Coe. On November 8, 1964 the first Mass was celebrated in the new church. Parishioners recall seeing blue plastic covering the upper windows in the sanctuary where the beautiful stained glass windows are today. The crucifix we see today was in place, but the tabernacle and candle holders from the old church were placed on the shelf above the new marble altar against the back wall of the sanctuary. In those times the priest did not face the people. The two marble topped altar rails were in place. The bronze gates that joined the two sides together had not arrived. Father Roach from St. John's Seminary in Somis came on Sunday to offer Mass. Male parishioners became lectors. Fifteen hundred families were registered in the parish, organizations were formed and the Religious Education program expanded. By 1965, 4000 students were being taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame and lay teachers in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. A well-organized group of volunteers registered students, assisted in the classrooms, worked in the office, transported students, and served in many other roles, even directing traffic. The first Confirmation class was



The Flaherty brothers - five future St. Rose of Lima School students



The dedication of St. Rose of Lima School
by Cardinal McIntyre

The changes encouraged by the Vatican Council became evident at St. Rose. The altar was moved away from the sanctuary wall in April 1970. Lay ministries were formed and parish organizations grew. On August 23, 1972, the feast day of St. Rose of Lima, Father Patrick McDonagh died. He had served the parish and the people faithfully. He is buried in Assumption Cemetery on Fitzgerald Road in Simi Valley.

The Reverend James McKeon acted as the Parish Administrator until the arrival of the new pastor, Father Sylvester O'Byrne, on November 20, 1972. Soon afterwards the parish boundaries were changed and a new parish, St. Peter Claver, was established. Reverend James McKeon was appointed as pastor of the new parish. In 1973 Father O'Byrne requested permission to build a parish hall to serve the social needs of the people and also provide a place for meetings. The parish hall was completed in May of 1975 and blessed by Cardinal Manning. On May 19, 1976 the parish celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Father O'Byrne's ordination to the priesthood. In his concern for the people at the mission church in Moorpark, Father O'Byrne requested a priest be assigned to serve them. In 1978 Reverend John F. Cunningham was appointed the first pastor of Holy Cross, Moorpark. St. Rose continued to grow. There were between 300-400 students and adults confirmed every year during the 1970's. Lay ministries flourished and both men and women served the parish as lectors and Eucharistic ministers. Home masses were celebrated for special occasions.

In 1983 our church was remodeled to create the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which was to be used for daily Mass. The east wall of the chapel was enclosed

with glass and the tabernacle was moved from the main altar to the altar in the chapel. This was done to conserve both energy and parish funds by limiting the heating and air conditioning of the main church. The population of the area continued to grow and the parish family increased to 4000 families in 1982 when we celebrated Father O'Byrne's tenth anniversary as pastor. In 1985 Father O'Byrne was reassigned as pastor of Our Lady of Carmel Church in Montecito. He was later named as a Monsignor.

In 1985 Father Michael Bunny was appointed as the pastor of St. Rose. In 1988 he proposed that a new wing consisting of a music room, adult ministry center, library, faculty lounge, and youth ministry center be built along the back of the school. This was dedicated by Bishop Sylvester Ryan in September 1990. The 1990's also saw the addition of girls as altar servers. Father Bunny responded to the wish of many of the parishioners for a place to meet after Mass to enjoy a cup of coffee and chat. In September 1991 the patio was completed and it has been a very popular gathering place for the parish community. On February 23, 1992 the parish celebrated Father Bunny's elevation to Monsignor. He served at St. Rose until December of 1995 when he was named as the new pastor of St. Julie Billiart in Newbury Park. Reverend Jarlath Dolan was appointed parish administrator and served the parish until July of 1996 when Father Michael Carcerano became our new pastor. On September 22, 1996 we celebrated our 75th anniversary with an outdoor Mass and family barbecue. As we approach the new millennium of Christianity, may we open our hearts to live the gospel values.



Father Michael Bunny celebrating his elevation to
Monsignor with his mother and sister