

The Story OF St. Theresa Parish

St. Theresa Parish
30 Mandalay Road
Oakland, California
Monsignor Bernard Moran, Pastor

CHAPTER ONE

BEFORE THERE WAS A ST. THERESA

St.

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CHAPTER ONE:

BEFORE THERE WAS A ST. THERESA PARISH

The first Europeans to visit what is now St. Theresa parish arrived in 1772. Captain Pedro Fages' expedition to find an overland route from Monterey Bay to San Francisco Bay found a high, dry, vantage point on a small bluff overlooking the full panorama of San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate. The expedition's maps and journals show that the hill is the one now shared by the College of Arts and Crafts and the Claremont Country Club.

A later expedition, led by De Anza in 1776, included a 17 year-old soldier, Luis Peralta. Peralta loved the country, with its wild flowers and woodlands and the creeks which ran heavy with salmon and steelhead past the Ohlone's tule sweathouses, called "temescals" by the Spanish. When he retired from the Mexican Army in 1820, he requested, and was given, title to all of the land covering what is now Oakland and Berkeley.

For 30 years Peralta and his family cut timber and grazed cattle from their rancho bases, establishing a strong Catholic presence in the East Bay. One of his sons, Jose Vicente Peralta controlled all the area from Lake Merritt on the south to what is now Alcatraz Avenue on the north, from the bay to the crest of the hills. Vicente's adobe hacienda stood near the north bank of Temescal Creek, along the road that joined the family's rancheros to Mission San Jose to the South.

Writers have romanticized this era, but life was difficult. Women tended to have large families, and preparation of food was a continuing process. Virtually every commodity, such as clothing and cooking ware, had to be obtained from Yankee traders. Priests were few and located far from most of the ranchos, so the Sacraments, such as marriage and baptism, became huge parties, with neighbors coming on horseback and staying for days at a time. Because the Californians shared a Spanish heritage and the Catholic faith, and because they intermarried so extensively, they lived lives with few conflicts.

By the 1850's, this Spanish-Catholic influence ended abruptly. The gold rush brought hundreds of Anglo squatters and poachers to the area, and the Peraltas were pressured to sell out. A former Texas Ranger, John Hays, bought a large parcel from the Peralta family that included most of what is now St. Theresa's Parish. He sold pieces of the land to wealthy friends, who built large, elegant estates.

While San Francisco boomed during this period, Oakland remained something of a backwater. Eventually there was enough urban growth in the flat lands along the estuary to create a demand for a better fresh water supply, and in the 1860's Anthony Chabot dammed Temescal Creek to form Lake Temescal. Paving Oakland's streets around lower Broadway also created a need for rock and dirt, and two quarriers named Blake and Bilger began to dig rock out of the same hill the Fages party had climbed a century before. (The water-filled quarry is still visible next to the Rockridge Shopping Center.) The operation eventually employed hundreds of men, many of them Italian-Catholic immigrants, who settled in the area west of College along Temescal Creek. Many Italians operated truck gardens, irrigated by the creek, and sold their produce downtown, or canned it in small factories.

The coming of electric street railways in the 1890's made it possible for people to live further away from downtown Oakland, and the fire and earthquake of 1906 increased the flow of migrants to the East Bay. Oakland's population tripled between 1890 and 1910. In 1909, the city of Oakland, looking for

acreage for future growth, annexed the area then called "Rockridge". The district got its name from a huge rock on property owned by Horatio Livermore, used by the family as a picnic site. The rock, which was at the corner of Glenbrook and Bowling Drive, was later dynamited for home sites.

Because much of Rockridge had been sold in large estates, the area was sparsely inhabited until a developer laid out streets and sewers throughout the triangle formed by Broadway, Broadway Terrace, and Lake Temescal. Interested buyers took the Oakland Traction Line electric streetcar out College to Lawton, walked to the gates of the development on Broadway, and then were transported in motor cars to see available lots. The developers sold an impressive \$186,000 worth of lots the first day.

By 1925 most of the lots that could be reached easily by the rudimentary vehicles of the day had homes built on them. Broadway was built solidly, all the way out to the Sacramento Northern Railway line that ran along Temescal Creek. A significant number of the new inhabitants of Rockridge were Catholics who had decided to "move up" from their homes on the flatlands. Planners in the Archdiocesan offices in San Francisco saw that many Catholics were now too distant from the older Churches to the west, and began to plan for a new parish to serve the new Rockridge district.

A picnic group (circa 1890) gathers at a huge rock on property owned by Horatio Livermore. The rock reportedly was at the corner of Glenbrook and Bowling Drive, and was later dynamited for home sites. The Livermore home was located near today's Broadway Terrace and Acacia, and the family's horses pastured on what is now the Claremont Country Club.



CHAPTER TWO:

CHURCH OF THE LITTLE FLOWER OF JESUS

In 1925, when Archbishop Edward Hanna of San Francisco decided to create a new parish in fast growing Oakland by splitting off the eastern, uphill portions of Sacred Heart and St. Augustine's parishes, his first task was to appoint a competent founding pastor. Archbishop Hanna knew he needed a priest with intelligence, spirituality, and the energy and optimism of an entrepreneur. A founding pastor received lots of direction, but very little material aid from the chancellery office. He was expected to raise the money from his new flock to repay the loans to build his new church as well as pay for parish operations. He was expected to win the loyalty and trust of Catholics who had "belonged" to another parish until the new boundaries were established. It was a daunting assignment.

Archbishop Hanna selected Father Daniel J. O'Kelley. Father O'Kelley was well equipped for the assignment. A native of County Tipperary, he began his studies for the priesthood in Ireland before completing them in the United States. After ordination in San Francisco in 1910, Father spent half of his first decade as a priest at St. Mary's Cathedral, where he got to know many of the archbishop's staff, and half at St. Augustine's in Oakland, where he met many of his future parishioners. A four-year stint as pastor of a church in Menlo Park further prepared him for the assignment to St. Theresa's. Finally his still-potent Irish brogue endeared him to the growing number of Irish Catholics in the area.

Archbishop Hanna gave Father O'Kelley an additional edge when he named the new parish for the newest saint, St. Theresa of Lisieux, The Little Flower of Jesus, who had been canonized in May 1925. Because there were already a number of St. Theresa parishes named for St. Theresa of Avila, including one in San Francisco, all of the early references to the new parish were to the "Church of the Little Flower of Jesus."

Three-quarters of a century later, it's difficult to comprehend how popular "The Little Flower" was. Catholic publications of the day were filled with advertisements soliciting petitions (and donations) from those who wished "The Little Flower" to intercede for them in heaven. The Carmelite Order was soliciting donations for a large basilica in honor of St. Theresa in the suburb of Alhambra in Southern California. And hundreds of parishes across the country set up small shrines to the Little Flower within their existing churches. One of the most impressive was at the new St. Leo's Church on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland. At each of these shrines, the faithful had the opportunity to kneel before a statue of The Little Flower and ask her to respond to their personal petitions by "sending down a rose."

In this setting, on October 15, 1925, Archbishop Hanna officially announced the new parish and the new pastor. Father O'Kelley got busy immediately. He lacked a place for his new congregation to meet, and asked a parishioner, Jonathon F. Chambers, of 5636 Broadway, to volunteer his living room. The first Mass was said there. (Mr. and Mrs. Chambers later were to be honored by Father O'Kelley with a brass plate in row three of the church on Manila. It was the only marked pew the church ever had.) When the 200-family parish outgrew the Chambers' residence, services were moved to the Rockridge Women's Club, then on Keith Avenue.

At the same time Father purchased a large lot on Manila Avenue, adjoining the Claremont Country Club, for the parishes' new church. There was a house on the property that Father O'Kelley insisted on

calling a "farmhouse" and he converted it into a temporary rectory. An architect, Leonard Ford, was retained immediately and a builder, J.J. Powers, started work a short time later. That winter of 1925-26 golfers at the Claremont Country Club putting out at the sixth hole could often hear Father O'Kelley exhorting the workers to "finish the job by St. Patrick's Day."

Archbishop Mitty dedicated the church on Manila on March 7, 1926, ten days before the pastor's deadline. Someone noticed immediately that the hastily built structure had no middle aisle, making for some very non-traditional funerals and weddings. A middle aisle was added later. The property, buildings and furniture cost a grand total of \$24,608, creating a significant debt for the tiny, new parish.

While all these logistical activities were underway, Father O'Kelley began to create the community of parishioners that was needed to make "The Church of the Little Flower of Jesus" a real parish. He acknowledged that his work at first was "mainly that of meeting the interest on the indebtedness" and that "collections were relatively small because the congregations were small." But as services broadened, the congregation and the collections increased. A Sunday school opened in April 1926, with 50 students. A short time later In September, he was able to secure the services of two members of the Sisters of the Holy Names as teachers, and attendance grew to 80. While there was no women's club of any type, a men's Holy Name Society was started with a membership of 50, and with George Lickteig as first president, Daniel Ring as vice president, and Joseph Carr as secretary/treasurer. Women of the parish made a considerable contribution toward retiring the debt by helping the Holy Name Society hold weekly whist games at the Rockridge Women's Club. Eventually, their success brought a complaint from the pastor of St. Augustine's when he found that many of the tickets for the St. Theresa whist games were being sold to his own parishioners.

As the first anniversary of the new parish passed, most founding pastors would have been proud of the progress being made at St. Theresa's, but Father O'Kelley was impatient. He looked at the size of the parish debt and noted the success others were having in attracting funds for shrines to The Little Flower. He began a public campaign, featuring large advertisements in the archdiocesan newspaper, to build a new "shrine to The Little Flower of Jesus" on the land next to his "temporary church" on Manila Avenue in Oakland. He noted that his parish was the "first in California to be named for The Little Flower".

The boldness of his vision caught the imagination of many people, both in and out of the parish. In a front-page story, the November 20, 1926 issue of the *Monitor*, official publication of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, said of the proposal, "The basilica planned by Father O'Kelley will be a permanent, enduring testimonial to this most favored saint. It will mean to California and the west what St. Anne's Shrine means to Canada, and what Monsignor Baker's Basilica of Our Lady of Victory means to Catholics of the east."

The article concluded that Father O'Kelley brought to his new assignment "the strength of young manhood, determined zeal and a capacity for work that is bound to win out over any and every obstacle." Neither the priest not the newspaper could have foreseen the start of the Great Depression, just a short time ahead. It shattered many dreams, including that of a great stone basilica on tiny Manila Street, drawing pilgrims from around the world.

St. Theresa of Lisieux was canonized in May, 1925, shortly before this parish was founded. She was a popular choice as patron saint for the parish.



The first Pastor of St. Theresa was Father Daniel J. O'Kelley, an Irish-born, San Francisco ordained priest. He was pastor for three decades.



Development of much of the land that now covers St. Theresa parish was begun around 1910 by a real estate developer. This photo looks across Broadway toward Rockridge Boulevard, which the builder framed with elaborate Italian stone pillars to attract affluent buyers.



The first church of St. Theresa Parish was completed in March 1925 at 5637 Manila Avenue in Oakland. When the new St. Theresa Church was built on Mandalay Road, the old structure was sold. For many years it was operated as a Protestant church, but at year-end 2000, it was unoccupied.

CHAPTER THREE

YEARS OF DEPRESSION AND WAR

The stock market crash of October 29, 1929, signaled the start of the worldwide Great Depression. Dreams of a new basilica to honor The Little Flower disappeared. Father O'Kelley realized that his "temporary" church on Manila would have to suffice, at least for a while.

In fact the small church was a good fit for the equally small congregation, especially in the formative years. The parish grew very slowly from the original 200 families to a reported 250 families by 1930. Shortly afterward the Sisters of the Holy Names built their new high school and the adjoining Maryrose Elementary School. The latter was for girls, but for a time was opened to boys through the fourth grade. Parish historian Marie Collins wrote, "The two schools opened in the fall of 1931, bringing into the parish a number of outstanding Catholic families anxious for their daughters to have a superior Catholic education." Marie also remembered that "there was a spurt of growth in the surrounding hills to accommodate these new families." Homebuilding did continue in the hills as more powerful automobiles and better streets improved access. But Father O'Kelley's reports to the Archdiocese did not reflect any significant surge in the number of Catholics served by the parish.

Moreover, from his point of view, the new elementary school met few of his needs as a pastor. He complained in one letter to the archdiocese that "the Maryrose School is rather an exclusive private academy, and the raising of the rates...this year will tend to make it more so. Moreover, it is more than a mile from the centre of the parish, is uphill the whole way, and can only be reached by bus, easy enough for high school children, but not so accessible for little ones." He concluded that St. Augustine and Sacred Heart parish schools are both "nearer to us," and "we have a number of children going to both because the rates (are lower)."

Father O'Kelley's apparent vexation with the Sisters of the Holy Names was apparently short-lived, and had no evident impact on the families in the parish. Not only did the parish send most of its young women to Holy Names High School for their education, but a total of 18 parishioners became Sisters of the Holy Names, a tremendous contribution for such a small parish.

During the 1930's Father O'Kelley battled to raise income and reduce expenses. He did this by enlisting the aid of parishioners.

A group of 15 women, later named the "sewing circle" met twice a month beginning in November 1934 to supply the altar linens needed in the church. As the precarious financial status of the parish became more evident, they began to make hand-sewn aprons and sold them for 35 cents each. The profits paid for the floral sprays for the altar, and once for an emergency visit by a plumber when plumbers made \$2.50 an hour.

The Saint Vincent DePaul Conference was started in late 1938 to help the pastor take care of people in need, both in and out of the parish. The Holy Name Society, which had been allowed to lapse, was reorganized in the late 1930's to raise money for the pastor and take the parish census. The society sponsored breakfasts, picnics, festivals and barbecues.

Even with the help, Father O'Kelley was sometimes despondent. He wrote to a friend at the vicar's office, "I too have had a difficult time of it since the beginning. There was never a month that I was able to meet all my bills. Some always had to go over to the next month and I have been month after month been put to the pin of my collar to make things go...I am tired of it and it has made me nervous."

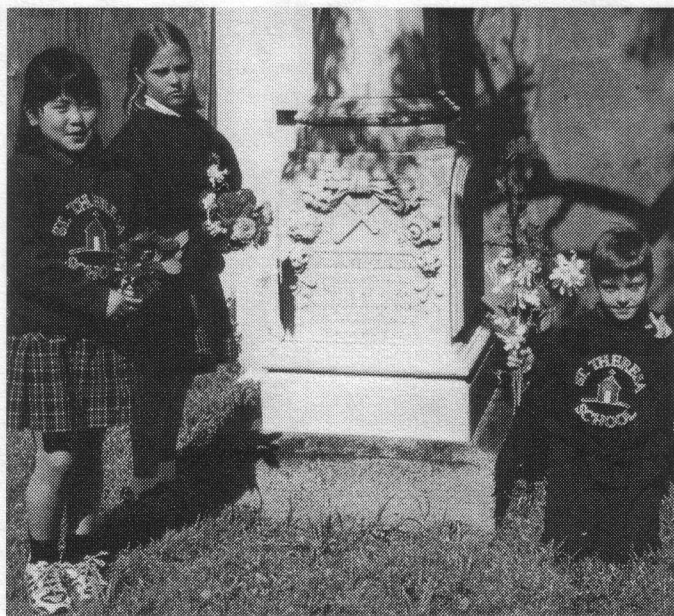
Father O'Kelley's personality was such that it might have been difficult for him to discuss his problems with his parishioners. Those who remember him describe him as aloof and standoffish. "He should have been a college professor," remembered Gene Campi, "because he loved his books and academics. His rectory on Manila had bookshelves in every room, wall-to-wall books. It was a huge private collection for the day, and he said that he'd read every book he owned—two or three times."

While he did keep most parishioners at arm's length, he did enjoy bringing carloads of altar boys to Fenton's for "thank you" lunches. Otherwise he left most of the socializing to his assistant pastors. And many were terrific at it. Two of his assistants were Merlin Guilfoyle, who became Bishop of Stockton, and John Scanlan, later Bishop of Honolulu. They and other assistants helped make St. Theresa parish a very special place.

During World War II membership in all of the parish's clubs declined as men went off to war and as women took over jobs held by their husbands. The St. Theresa Holy Name Society dwindled to a small group, called the "durable dozen" by its members. Even the number of priests in the archdiocese was sapped as all of the armed services sought chaplains.

When war ended in 1945 and veterans began to return to civilian life, a new spurt of growth occurred in the Oakland hills. Servicemen who had come through the Bay Area on their way to the Pacific Theater had fallen in love with the setting and the climate. They used the GI bill to build new homes, and soon houses began to appear all over the eucalyptus-covered heights. Many of the newcomers were Catholics, and they brought their faith and energy to St. Theresa's parish.

Parishioners and St. Theresa School students Alex Scannell, left, and Andrea and Jared Guthrie, bring flowers to the grave of Vicente Peralta. Peralta's grave (a bit rundown right now) is at the crest of a hill in St. Mary's Cemetery in Oakland, very close to the spot where Spanish explorers first set foot in what is now St. Theresa parish, in 1772. Vicente Peralta owned much of Oakland and Berkeley during the 1840's.



Father O'Kelley poses outside the first St. Theresa Church on Manila with an early First Communion Class. The photographer was careful to leave part of Father O'Kelley's new automobile in the photo. Reportedly he liked to push the top down and drive a group of altar boys to Fenton's for ice cream treats.

CHAPTER 4: FROM MANILA TO MANDALAY

Some older parishioners remember the decade after World War II as a wonderful time for St. Theresa's, an era of devout faith and energetic support for the parish. It seemed to energize Father O'Kelley in ways not seen since the original church was built. The number of families in the parish passed 700, and collections soared. The Holy Name Society was revitalized and in January 1950, the first women's club was formed—the St. Theresa Guild. The assignment to both organizations from Father O'Kelley was to raise money for a new church; after 25 years, the “temporary” church on Manila had finally been outgrown.

With the help of a few parishioners Father searched for a site and found the present property between Mandalay and Clarewood. He submitted a rough site plan to the Archdiocesan Building Committee at year-end 1949 and received approval on January 4, 1950. The plan called for an auditorium (to be used as a temporary church) to be built where the present church stands today, and a future school and convent to be built where they are today. On another part of the property, fronting on Clarewood, were to be the new permanent church and the new rectory.

The new location did not win everyone's acceptance. Bill Clarke remembered that several parishioners with construction experience were concerned because a deep ravine ran right down the middle of the property, making future expansion difficult. Others, who lived near the Manila church, complained bitterly that the new church was not accessible to people who did not drive. Father O'Kelley was deeply concerned about the latter complaint and for a while said Mass at both locations. He had little patience for those who griped about the uneven terrain, and he was on hand the first day when the bulldozer began moving dirt around the property.

As the new building began to take shape, some parishioners noted that the basement of the building would make an adequate auditorium. Builder and parishioner Jim Roberts was described as “loving concrete” and was constructing the new structure like a fort. This led a number of people to suggest that the top floor could become a gymnasium for the new school, an idea that Father O'Kelley did little to discourage. Eventually some of the fund-raising among families with school-aged children focused on building a “new gym for the children.” When word got back to the Archdiocesan Building Committee, which did not make gymnasiums a high priority, Father O'Kelley had to reassure them that the building was, indeed, an auditorium.

In September of 1951 the opening of the new building was marked by a three-day fall-festival. Both the Guild and the Holy Name Society had worked tirelessly under chair Jack McDonnell to mount what was a combination celebration and fund-raiser. Father O'Kelley's letter to parishioners announced the opening of the “new auditorium off Clarewood Drive, the first of a number of buildings...the upstairs will serve as a temporary church seating 700 people.” Archbishop John Joseph Mitty dedicated the church to “St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus” on October 1.

According to Veronica Dickey, “The first real occasion following its opening was the Midnight Mass on Christmas 1951. It was like being a part of another world! Huge wreaths topped with red satin bows decorated the sides of the church. The altar was banked solidly with red poinsettias and lighted candles. The choir in the loft in back of the church was at its very best. All this formed the background for this

Christmas Mass said with such fervor that one could feel the quiet reverence spreading through the congregation. That night Bethlehem seemed very near—so near that one could believe that Bethlehem was just south of Clarewood Drive.”

Father O’Kelley continued with his plans for development of the property and ran into his first snag. Instead of approving construction of a new rectory on Clarewood Drive, adjoining the site for the “permanent church,” the Archdiocese recommended that he move the old rectory from Manila to the new site. Further, the budget only permitted minor foundation work, which meant the rectory had to be sited where the existing rectory is today. Father thought the change ruined some of the symmetry of his original plan, but he moved ahead with construction nonetheless.



Groundbreaking in May 1950 for the new St. Theresa Church on Mandalay was typically informal. Pastor Daniel O’Kelley walked up to bulldozer operator Sam King and said, “We’ve waited long enough, Sam. Let’s get this job going.”

Oscar got up from his pew and joined the other men at the communion rail. It was his signal that he had converted to Catholicism. “We got all misty-eyed,” Libbey said, “I’ll never forget that morning.”

In early 1952 Father O’Kelley began a campaign to build the school and convent. He asked for Archbishop Mitty’s support, and the latter sent a letter to all parishioners on March 13, 1952. He asked them to get behind the campaign to “raise \$200,000 for the reduction of your parish debt and for the building of a school where your children may receive an education under religious auspices.” A year later, in 1953, the Archbishop was surprised to learn that Father O’Kelley had not sold the old church on Manila, the proceeds of which were to jumpstart the campaign. The Archbishop assigned an aide to help Father with the sale, and in October 1953 it was sold for \$20,000. The proceeds went to St. Theresa’s Building Fund.

During this period the Holy Name Society and the St. Theresa’s Guild continued to raise significant monies for the pastor and to carry the parish reputation well beyond the few square miles of the parish. The Guild held “turkey whists” at the local women’s club, a rummage sale at Norway Hall, and sponsored book review teas, all as fundraisers. The Holy Names Society held fund raising breakfasts at Pland’s Restaurant at Broadway and MacArthur, sparking attendance by inviting noted sports figures as speakers.

But most people remembered the tremendous sense of faith and community that brought together the parishioners of St. Theresa in those days. Jack Libbey remembered that a non-Catholic, Oscar Peterson, was very active in the Holy Names Society, even helping each year with the logistics of the Retreat at El Retiro near San Jose. Then one Sunday, at a special Mass for the Holy Names Society,

A year later in 1954, Father O'Kelley vacationed in Ireland. He approached the mother general of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, and asked if they might send him three sisters to staff his new school. She reportedly told him that she would provide seven sisters. But by the time he arrived home in July of that year he received a letter from the nuns telling him that the Archbishop of Dublin had forbade them from going to California. Father O'Kelley then requested Archbishop Mitty to write to Dublin asking for reconsideration. To Father's deep disappointment, Archbishop Mitty refused to intervene.

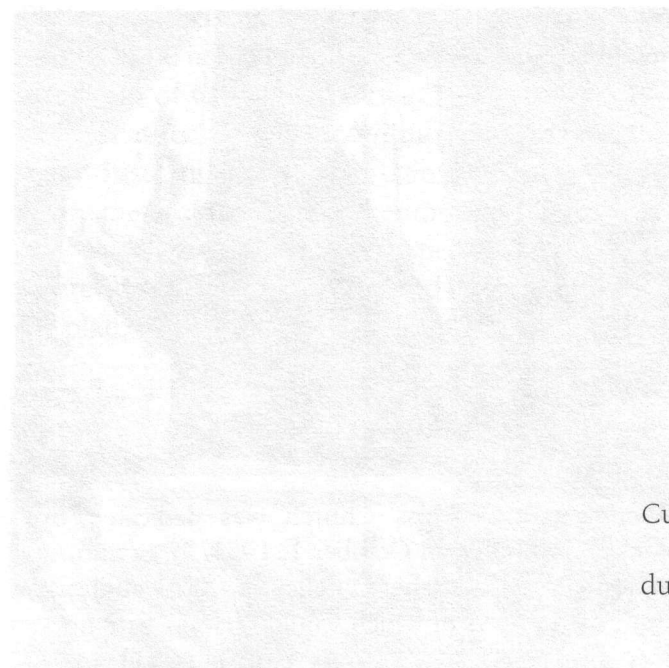
By 1955 Father O'Kelley was 74 years old and past the age of retirement for pastors of that era. Whether he had any doubts about his own energy to conduct a \$200,000 building project is not reflected in any correspondence. But on June 8, 1955 he submitted his resignation as pastor to Archbishop Mitty for "reasons of health." He had given the parishioners of St. Theresa 30 years of his life, built two churches, and had been responsible for dozens of vocations to the priesthood and sisterhood. Parishioners who knew him would never forget him.



The new St. Theresa Church was dedicated by Archbishop Mitty on October 1, 1951. The building was identified by Father O'Kelley as a "new auditorium", the upstairs of which would serve as "a temporary church." The temporary church is still going strong, more than 50-years later.

The first officers of the new St. Theresa Guild pose for a photographer of the Oakland Post-Inquirer in March 1950. The Guild was begun to raise money for the new church on Mandalay.





Monsignor Robert J. Cullen served as pastor for 16 eventful years during the aftermath of Vatican II.



At a February 1957 meeting of the Men's Club, plans for St. Theresa School were shown for the first time. In the background, at the head table were, from left, John McCarthy, Jack McDowell, Father Cullen, and contractor Jim Roberts. Pledges assured the start of construction that spring.

CHAPTER FIVE: YEARS OF UPHEAVAL

When Archbishop Mitty appointed Father Robert J. Cullen the new pastor of St. Theresa Parish in mid-1955, it might have appeared that he was selecting a clone of Father O'Kelley. Like his predecessor, Father Cullen was of Irish ancestry, ordained in San Francisco (on June 16, 1928), and had served as an assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral and at other parishes throughout the archdiocese. However Father Cullen was a native San Franciscan and much more "laid-back" than the ascetic and intellectual Father O'Kelley.

Frank Mansell remembered his first meeting with Father Cullen when he enrolled in the parish. Anxious for his children to become eligible for St. Theresa School, Mansell assured Father that he had always been an active volunteer in every parish in which he lived, and he intended to continue to be active in St. Theresa's. Father Cullen put his arm around Frank's shoulder and said, "Take a vacation, Mr. Mansell. We have plenty of workers right now. Spend some time with your family."

Father Cullen's first task when he became pastor was to resurrect the school campaign. He brought Jim Roberts, the builder of the church, into the planning process. He involved Jack McCarthy, president of the Holy Name Society, and parish leader Jack McDonnell. In January 1957 he called a meeting of the men of the parish to show plans for the new school. His approach was vintage Cullen. "You say you want the school," he told the group, "then take the responsibility for building it." The pledges from that meeting were enough to start construction and both the school and convent were opened in time for the September 1958 school term. The Sisters of the Holy Names accepted Father Cullen's invitation to staff the new elementary school; they, in turn, closed the Maryrose School.

Father Cullen's popularity soared. "He was a man's man," remembered one parishioner. "He seemed like an average guy. He would take a drink, he smoked, and he loved to joke around."

While Father Cullen spent much of his energy cultivating the assistance of males in the parish, he also encouraged the active participation of women. With the opening of the school, women in St. Theresa Parish for the first time had a vehicle for influencing their children's education and the way the parish related to the community at large. The Mother's Club (later the Parent's Club) raised money for items to enrich their children's education, such as books for the school library and audiovisual equipment. They also conducted drug education programs, sponsored Brownie and Girl Scout Troops, and launched a "birthright" program. Under the energetic leadership of Caroline Roberts Morris, Yvonne Dolan, Mary McInerney, Marty Loquvam and Barbara Morrill, the Mother's Club established a leadership role for women that would set the standard for the rest of the diocese.

The establishment of the Oakland Diocese in 1962 under Bishop Floyd Begin also increased the opportunities for volunteering in diocesan-wide programs. Board seats on activities as diverse as Catholic Charities and the editorial committee of the Catholic Voice were awarded to St. Theresa parishioners. Barbara Morrill and Marilyn Mosher used their experience from the St. Theresa Mother's Club to serve on the Diocesan School Board. Marty Loquvam started the Volunteers in Parochial Schools program. The leadership roles played by many parishioners were recognized when more than a dozen men and women from the parish were named Knights of Dames of Malta or St. Gregory.

All through the 1950's and early 1960's the parish prospered under the easy stewardship of father Cullen. He was able to build a new rectory to replace the one that Father O'Kelley had lovingly transported from the Manila site. He encouraged the start of a teen club and CCD classes for high school boys and

girls, with Anita Vassar, Marie Collins, Al Troik and Bill McNerney as faculty. Marian Kane remembered that "We were a close-knit community. A real family."

The next few years challenged the fabric of that community. A wave of change came from the outside and threatened to wash away the foundations of all familiar institutions.

The first institution to feel the heat was the federal government. In 1965 President Johnson sent troops to Viet Nam to prevent the South Vietnamese government from collapsing, resulting in "teach-ins" at several universities, including UC Berkeley, and eventually to civil disobedience. The unrest spread to the women's movement and the National Organization for Women was organized to pass an equal rights amendment. Black civil rights leaders, who had won praise for the non-militant "March on Washington" now split into two factions. One continued to advocate non-violence. The other advocated "black power." Watts burned, and so did a number of inner cities. The Black Panthers organized in Oakland. All of these events occurred within a few months of one another beginning in 1965.

The cumulative effect, said Margaret Slattery, "Was to scare the life out of a lot of people. We saw a number of good, active families move out of the parish and into homes in the suburbs where they felt safer."

While not a cause of "white flight" the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council were also upsetting for some Catholics. Pope John XXIII made preparation for the council to be a symbol of the Church's openness to the outside world; he sought participation of women's orders and Protestant and Orthodox churches. After four years of meeting, the 2500 bishops issued a number of pronouncements, called "constitutions" beginning in December 1965.

The most important was the Constitution of the Church, which turned the hierarchy of the Church on its head. It called the Church the "people of God" and emphasized the servant nature of offices, such as priest and bishop, and the shared responsibility of all the bishops for the entire Church. It also called all members to holiness and to participation in the mission of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The lay press gave more attention to the Constitution on Liturgy. This section recommended more active participation in the Mass. It called for the replacement of Latin, the ancient language of the Sacrament, with vernacular languages. It also resulted in turning the priest around while saying Mass; he now faced the congregation.

These changes were received positively at first. But as other movements around the world deepened the hostility, the changes of Vatican II were seen by some as themselves a cause of unrest. Over the next five years at St. Theresa Parish, a schism developed between traditionalists and those who welcomed the changes. A few parishioners began attending Mass at churches where they continued to use Latin; others went to Newman hall in Berkeley for a more liberal celebration. After Mass one Sunday two parishioners began to hand out an anti-war statement, just released by the Priest Senate. Some others on the church steps loudly criticized the action. Fortunately for Father Cullen, he had just set up a new parish council (according to Vatican II recommendations) and the new body was able to step in and establish new rules that took both sides into consideration and quieted the conflict.

One unforeseen result of all of this conflict was that a significant number of priests, brothers and sisters lost their way and gave up their vocations. The immediate impact on the parish was that there were fewer priests to take on the responsibilities of assistant pastor, and fewer sisters available to staff the school.

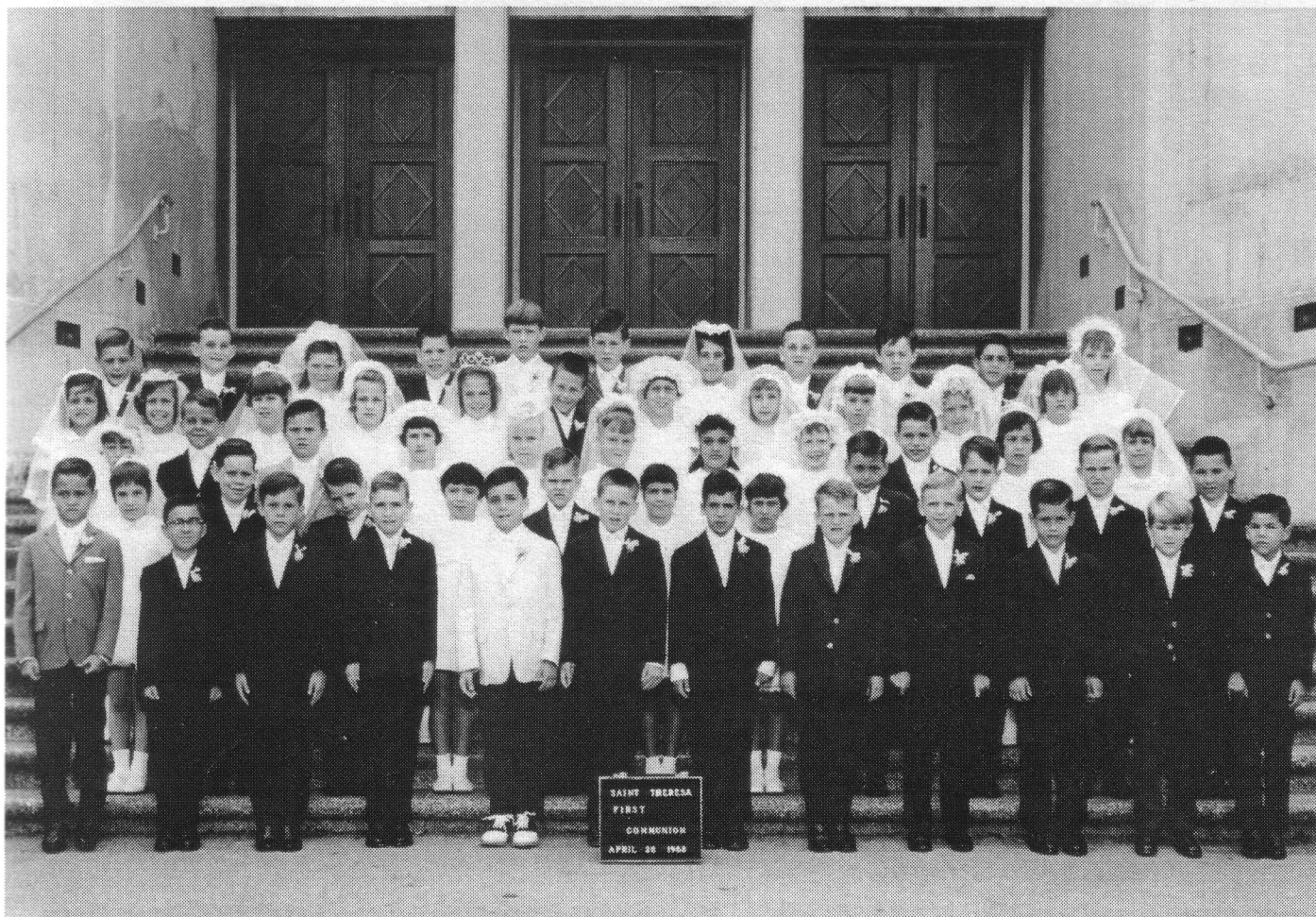
Obviously many religious were undeterred. Father Denis Collins, SJ, son of parishioners Edward and Marie Collins, was in the seminary during the 1960's. In 1999 he returned to his home parish as a guest homilist, and he talked about the turmoil of the time, with seminarians debating whether they should drop out. "It was not an option for me because I was clear as to why I was there. If you really have

a vocation, these things are only distractions.” He said his first Mass at St. Theresa on June 8, 1969.

Father Paul Vassar, son of parishioners Eugene and Anita Vassar, said his first Mass at St. Theresa Church on June 6, 1971. He said the conflicts during the years following Vatican II actually strengthened his vocation. “The dialogues that we had in the seminary helped me to understand that my vocation was my choice, and my choice only. The weakening of the hierarchy of the Church only strengthened my relationship with God.”

Through all of this unrest, both in and out of the parish, Father Cullen was an island of calm. He was determined that the adoption of the recommendations of Vatican II would not be delayed at St. Theresa. He asked his associate pastor, Father William Abeloe, to take charge of the changes in liturgy. He and parishioner Don Morris headed a steering committee to set up a parish council. A constitution was drawn up, committees appointed, and in 1970 the first Parish Council was formed, giving the lay people of the parish unprecedented participation in the parish’s affairs.

During the late 1960’s Bishop Begin had named Father Cullen a monsignor in recognition of his steady stewardship of what was now a leadership parish in the Diocese of Oakland. However, Monsignor Cullen was nearing retirement age. It would soon be time to name the third pastor of St. Theresa Parish.



The 1968 St. Theresa First Communion Class poses for a group photo on the steps of the church. Several members of the class still reside in the parish, and two have children in the school, evidence of the bond between the parish and its parishioners.



Five busloads of parishioners joined Catholics from all over Northern California in October 1961, for a "rosary crusade" prayer meeting in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. In the background of this photo is the old rectory that had been moved to Mandalay from Manila. It was soon to be replaced by a new rectory.

CHAPTER 6;

REACHING OUTWARD

With Monsignor Cullen's retirement in June 1971, Bishop Begin appointed Monsignor Michael J. Lucid as the new pastor of St. Theresa's. Like his two predecessors, Monsignor Lucid was Irish and a San Franciscan. Like them he had served in a number of parishes in the Bay Area after he was ordained on June 11, 1954. And like them, he had had experience at cathedral and diocesan levels, though *his* assignments had been in the new Oakland Diocese, both as rector at St. Francis De Sales Cathedral and as director of the Diocesan CCD program.

Former parishioner Michael Lauth was in elementary school when Monsignor Lucid came to St. Theresa in 1971, and he remembered what an imposing figure he was. "He was a big man, broad and tall, and he had a big, baritone voice. He also had a way of looking at people that let you know he wasn't kidding around. In fact, when I was an altar boy, I used to hear stories of kids at other parishes who took sips of the altar wine, or played tricks on priests. We NEVER tried that with him around."

Monsignor's first action was to meet with Parish Council president George McDonnell and with his new associate pastor, Father Richard Brett, to discuss priorities. McDonnell remembered that he told Monsignor Lucid that he thought the first priority of the parishioners was to remodel the church; a number of people were complaining that it was growing a bit shabby after its twenty years of life, and the "new" altar looked like an afterthought. Monsignor Lucid smiled. "That's fine, George, because *my* first priority is to make the liturgy more meaningful, and to do that we have to remodel the church."

Monsignor Lucid's imposing presence may have terrorized a few young parishioners, but he soon made it clear that he wanted the involvement of as many people as possible in parish activities. He turned the Parish Council and the parish School Board into decision-making bodies. When the church remodeling began he moved Mass to the hall downstairs, with the congregation surrounding the altar. After a few weeks, murmurs about the vernacular Mass ceased altogether. At St. Theresa, sitting on metal chairs in compact basement space, parishioners were forced to become active participants in the Sacrament.

A number of parishioners felt that Monsignor Lucid's homilies were themselves reasons to worship at St. Theresa's. "He had that wonderful voice and striking presence," said Ed Sanford. "And his homilies had lots of human anecdotes so listeners could relate to his message."

St. Theresa traditionally had an all-male choir. Monsignor Lucid changed this tradition and installed Mike Shoop as the new choir director, with both men and women singing at Sunday Mass. (Later Bishop Begin called the choir one of the "best in the diocese.") The tradition of lay lectors and Eucharistic ministers began. For parishioners in temporary need, because of illness or a new baby in the family, he instituted the Fish Program to provide cooked meals, and to do laundry and clean house. Virtually every woman in the parish cooked at least one meal under the Program, and some volunteered almost every week. Mary McDonnell's lamb dinners caused one recipient to comment that it was like "having Chez Panisse do the catering."

Monsignor Lucid pushed the congregation to get more active in the larger community of Oakland, and the parish responded with sponsorship of Sunday dinners for the elderly at St. Mary's Church in West Oakland, North Oakland pantry collections, establishment of a blood bank, and sponsorship of a Vietnamese immigrant family.

His ability to get parishioners looking outward was legendary. According to Barbara Morrill "He had a way of making you think it was your idea all along, so pretty soon you were volunteering to do things that you would never would have done otherwise. We'd all be saying, 'Gee we're lucky to have all that we have at St. Theresa. Can't we share some of this?'"

In 1978, St. Theresa's "helping hand" was formalized with the startup of *Growth Through Ministry*, a program to give aid to the needy in three inner-city parishes—St. Columba, St. Mary and St. Patrick. Under the leadership of Peter Boero, Tony Spica and Bob Wheeler, this group provided food, cash donations and volunteer labor as needed. The food was solicited monthly through the St. Theresa "Giving Tree."

Boero also served as St. Theresa's representative to the *Concern* program, an organization that sends trained volunteers into Third World countries. St. Theresa agreed to pay the expenses of one Concern volunteer each year, and raised the money through events, such as concerts. (In 1985, Boero was the recipient of the Diocese's *Mother Seton Award*, given to a graduate of an Oakland parochial school who best exemplifies the Catholic spirit in rendering service to others.)

The St. Theresa Chapter of the Italian Catholic Federation had long been an important part of parish life, making donations to the pastor twice a year and participating in various parish events. In 1980, the ICF took the lead in planning the remodeling of the kitchen in the Church hall. The new restaurant-style kitchen, in turn, allowed the club to prepare gourmet Italian dinners for large parish celebrations. Under the leadership of people like Gino Chegia, Lou Alberti, Lorraine Curotto, John Maffeo and Carl Rossi, the club's meals became the accepted way for the pastor to say "thank you" to volunteers.

Monsignor Lucid was concerned about the drop in vocations to religious life. He appointed a vocations committee chaired by Frank Scarr, and the committee recommended a number of prayerful activities for the parish. These included the composition and printing of the "prayer for vocations" said during each Mass on the third Sunday of the month, and the "31 Club," in which parishioners sign up to attend mass on the same day each month for vocations.

The Golden Jubilee Celebration of St. Theresa parish in 1975 was an enormous success. While unpretentious, the Church finally looked "permanent" with a new stone altar, new carpeting, new paint and a new pew configuration. There were no more references to it being a "temporary church."

A solemn liturgical Mass was said at 12:15 on October 5, and Monsignor Lucid invited several priests who had served the parish or had received their vocation in the parish, to join him on the altar along with celebrant Bishop Floyd Begin. Former parishioner Father Paul Vassar gave the homily, former parishioner Denis Collins, S.J., was a co-celebrant, as were Fathers William Abeloe, Richard Brett and J. Garcia Prieto. Retired pastor Monsignor Robert Cullen had a place of honor next to the Bishop. There was another Mass of celebration on November 8, a parish picnic on September 14, and a huge dinner dance for more than 600 at the Colombo Club.

In his brief talk, Bishop Begin expressed great pleasure in the parish and its parishioners and for the mark they were making in the Diocese. "St. Theresa Parish has come to be a very special place," he said. He was certainly aware of the number of Papal Honors already received by members of the small congregation seated before him. During the next 25 years, recognition continued. Karl Webber, Robert Galindo and Bill McInerney were to be named Knights of Malta, and Peggy Donovan and Mary McInerney were named Dames of Malta. Frank Scarr became a Knight of St. Gregory. Barbara and Ed Morrill were honored by Pope John Paul II, who gave each of them a Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal.

In 1979 Monsignor Lucid celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest at St. Theresa, and the St. Theresa

Guild feted him at a reception after Mass. Many parishioners remember the sense of personal loyalty they had come to feel for this big Irishman, by now somewhat hobbled by chronic back pains. Therefore there was surprise and sorrow when he was transferred in August 1981, to St. Augustine Parish in Pleasanton. "What a great loss," said Bill Clarke at the time. "I think the Bishop has made a mistake."



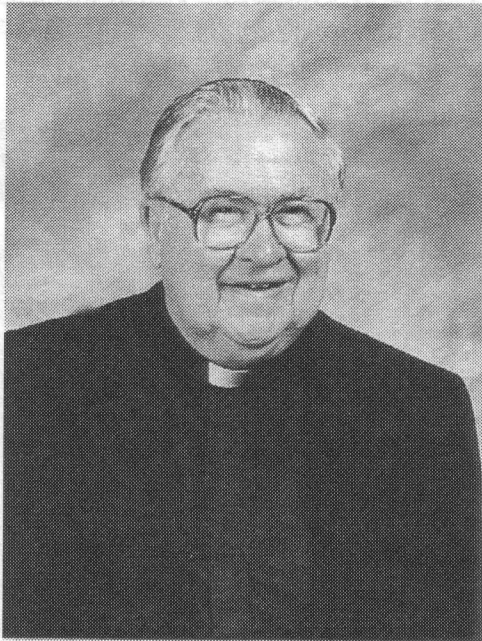
Members of the parish council meet off-site in 1974 to plan the 50-year celebration. Parish chair Jim Vohs, third from left at top, stands next to Monsignor Lucid.



At the fifty-year celebration of St. Theresa Parish on October 5 1975 three of the co-celebrants pause on the church steps. Monsignor Michael Lucid, pastor, left, and retired pastor Monsignor Robert Cullen, right, flank Bishop Floyd Begin.



Members of the Italian Catholic Federation get ready for one of their famous parish dinners in the hall. Since the kitchen was refurbished in 1980 it has given the ICF the tools to serve large groups of parishioners.



Monsignor Bernard Moran is the fourth pastor in St. Theresa Parish history. Like his three predecessors, he is of Irish descent and was ordained in San Francisco.

CHAPTER 7

THE FOURTH PASTOR

Bishop John Cummins named Monsignor Bernard Moran as the fourth pastor of St. Theresa's on August 24, 1981. Like his predecessors, Monsignor Moran was of Irish stock, and like the previous three pastors, born in San Francisco. He also had a wide range of experience in parish work, having served as associate pastor in four churches on both sides of the bay, as administrator of St. Joseph, Berkeley, and as pastor of St. Raymond in Dublin from 1970 until his transfer to St. Theresa. Monsignor Moran also had been a very successful administrator as Director of Cemeteries for the Oakland Diocese from 1962 to 1974; he'd been made a monsignor in 1967.

But this was not another case of a new young pastor succeeding a retiree. Monsignor Moran had been ordained in San Francisco on January 24, 1953—the same year as Bishop Cummins and one year before Monsignor Lucid. Since Monsignor Lucid and Monsignor Moran were contemporaries, many parishioners asked each other, what's the point of the switch?

One parishioner called a friend at St. Raymond to ask about the new pastor's style. She was surprised to learn that the parishioners at St. Raymond had given Monsignor Moran an automobile as a parting gift. She learned they were as unhappy about the personnel moves as the parishioners at St. Theresa. "That news somehow made Monsignor Lucid's leaving a bit easier for me," she said. "I began to think, this is larger than us. This is God's will. Learn to accept it."

Monsignor Moran once observed wryly that he was always being told how lucky he was to be given the "wonderful parish of St. Theresa." But if he had any regrets in the transfer, he did not show them. He built on Monsignor Lucid's legacy, and introduced a number of new programs.

A number of parishioners told him that they missed the ritual of some of the traditional Catholic observances, such as benediction and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He introduced a special devotion for the first Friday of each month with the Blessed Sacrament available on the altar all during the day after the 9:00 am Mass, followed by the Rite of Benediction in late afternoon.

He moved ahead with a necessary addition to the school—the Science and Arts Center, completed in early 1986.

During the 1980's Monsignor Moran had an encounter that was to be more meaningful for him and for the parish that it may have seemed at the time. A long-time parishioner, Margaret O'Keene was moving from her home on Taft Avenue into a retirement home. When Monsignor stopped by to offer what assistance he could, she made him a gift of a painting/collage of St. Theresa that had been given to her by friends in 1925 when the parish was established. Margaret had hung the painting in a place of honor in her home since the parishes' first Mass at the Chambers home on nearby Broadway. Monsignor was touched, and accepted the painting with great thanks. When he got home to the rectory he hung it on a wall opposite the front door, where all visitors would see it. Since it was just outside the usually-open door to his office, he could look at it for comfort whenever he wished.

He also organized the first census of the parish in some years. Under the direction of a steering committee composed of Barbara Westover, Pat Stott, Frank Scarr and Felix Chialvo, almost 200 workers from the parish rang all doorbells throughout the four square miles of the parish. If the residents were Catholic, data was recorded. If not Catholic, information on the parish and the Church was left.

The logistical details of major projects, like the census, were becoming more difficult because of a number of factors. Catholic housewives, who once did much of the parishes' work, were now themselves in the work force and not as available to volunteer. A significant portion of the parish population that had blue-collar jobs in the pre- and post-war years had moved away, and had been replaced by white collar workers who lacked the skills to help the parish with hands-on maintenance help. And the shortage of priests increased the workload on pastors everywhere. Father O'Kelley had been able to count on the help of two young associate pastors for much of his time in office. Monsignor Moran, with a larger parish to serve, had much less help.

Under the circumstances, Monsignor Moran had to develop a special knack for getting people in the parish to volunteer for needed jobs; he simply could not do it all himself, even if he wanted to. Don Querio a member of the Parish Council, said of Monsignor's recruiting methods, "He gets close to you, grabs your elbow, and smiles as he asks a favor. I usually agree to whatever it is as soon as touches my arm, because I know I'm a goner." Monsignor is also lavish with his praise and thanks, which brings people back to volunteer time after time.

Early in October 1991, several couples gathered for dinner and discussed how quickly Monsignor Moran had won over the parish. "He's a good shepherd for this flock, and he may be the best priest I have ever met for helping when there is an illness or death in the family. His compassion is so real, it wins everyone over."

"Maybe so," said another. But he's 63 years old, and this parish has already solved its major problems. He'd hate to hear me say it, but he's a caretaker pastor. I wouldn't expect any big challenges for him before he retires."



More than 200 strong, parishioners of St. Theresa made a pilgrimage to St. Mary's Church in downtown Oakland on December 10, 2000. The diocese's oldest parish was named by Bishop Cummins as a pilgrimage destination in honor of the Jubilee Year. Under the leadership of Rebecca Breska, Conrad Craig and Nancy Mariolle, St. Theresa parishioners gathered to sing, pray and recognize their Catholic traditions. Some individuals used the joyous occasion to donate warm clothing to the local homeless shelter.

CHAPTER 8:

TEMPERED BY FIRE

After the 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. Masses on October 20, 1991, parishioners gathered at the bottom of the steps of St. Theresa Church and talked about the hot, offshore wind. Someone mentioned that there had been lots of fire engines the day before in the hills next to the Caldecott Tunnel. With this wind, it was lucky the grass fire had been extinguished. A few people discussed Monsignor Moran's homily in which he noted that it was about 40 years ago that the first Mass had been said in the church on Mandalay. A few people chuckled about builder Jim Roberts' liberal use of concrete in the structure. Should last for another 500 years someone said.

By the 10:30 and 12:15 Masses, the mood became dark as the sky. There was a stinging, hot smoke carried down by the offshore winds. People nervously walked to their cars and drove home.

What happened that afternoon and early evening was a great urban disaster. A firestorm swept out of the hills, crossed two freeways, and killed 25 people. More than 3,000 residences were destroyed by a fire so hot that automobile engines melted and concrete foundations crumbled. Thousands of people were evacuated to emergency shelters and the police set up roadblocks to deter looters and permit fire fighters access to the fire storm area.

About two thirds of the fire storm area was within the boundaries of St. Theresa Parish, and approximately 240 families, one-third of the parish, lost their homes and many more were evacuated. In the incredible confusion of that Sunday afternoon and evening, many huddled in homes of friends or relatives, watching the destruction on television. In some cases they saw their own homes fall to the flames. Many families were separated and family members frantically called friends or combed emergency shelters to find their relatives.

Monsignor Moran remained in the rectory until 6:30 p.m. Then police ordered him to leave as the trees and bushes on the hill across from the Church burst into flames. He took the sacred vessels from the sacristy and a few private belongings and put them in his car. Almost as an afterthought, he also took a portrait of St. Theresa that hung in the rectory and added that to the items he saved. "At least the fire won't get this," he remembered thinking, and he drove off with the painting of St. Theresa on the seat next to him.

A short time later, the winds stopped, sparing thousands of structures from destruction. The St. Theresa parish buildings were untouched by the flames though they would have to remain vacant for several days. Civil authorities did not permit anyone to move back into the area until gas and electricity services were safely restored.

The painting of St. Theresa nearby, Monsignor Moran set up parish operations in St. Leo's Church rectory and attempted to gather what information he could. He talked to those he could reach by phone; for others he went to the lines of those waiting for police escorts to drive them to their homes to evaluate damage. He learned that parishioners were in need of shelter, clothing, food and other necessities—needs the city and other agencies were already trying to meet. But he recognized instinctively that they also needed spiritual, psychological and community support, and he looked for ways to provide them.

Early Wednesday morning, with no word yet as to when he could reoccupy St. Theresa, he mailed a letter to all parishioners, acknowledging that he did not know "where or when" the addressees would

receive it. In his letter, he promised that Mass would be celebrated at St. Theresa on Saturday, October 25 and Sunday October 26. School would reopen on Monday October 29 at the regular time.

But he added a few notes that foreshadowed what was to become a remarkable story of the Catholic community coming together at a time of crisis. He reported that Bishop Cummins would be present at the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses on Sunday. He said that Catholic Counseling Service would have staff available after all the Masses to "help all of us cope with these difficult days". He said that members of St. Columba Parish would be on hand to serve refreshments. He said that Monsignor Michael Lucid reported that the Church of the Assumption in San Leandro was sending its entire Sunday collection to Monsignor Moran for fire storm victims. With money from other sources, Monsignor Moran now had \$10,000 for people in immediate need. "All that I ask is that you contact me for assistance," he wrote.

He ended the letter, "let us continue to pray for one another. Love, Monsignor Bernard Moran and Parish Staff."

"When I saw that word 'Love' I began to cry," said one woman who lost her home and didn't get the letter for several days. "That's what we all needed right then."

The hunger of parishioners to be with one another after the tragedy was palpable. On Wednesday evening, the same day Monsignor Moran wrote the letter, he scheduled an impromptu Mass at St. Leo's Church. More than 600 people attended, alerted by word-of-mouth. Concelebrating with Monsignor was his host, St. Leo's pastor Father Tom Lester. Also on the altar was former St. Theresa parishioner Major Ray Troik, a Redemptorist priest and chaplain with the US Air Force. Father Troik had flown in to be with his parents Al and Clara Troik who had lost their home in the fire.

At the 9:00 a.m. Mass on October 28, one week after the firestorm, worshippers filled the church and spilled over onto the stairs outside. The Sacramento Bee reported "Babies, children, mothers, fathers, grandparents, all with heads bowed, converged to be reassured that there must be goodness after such destruction." They evidently found it at St. Theresa. The reporter said that one parishioner, Dan Dean, who had lost his home and everything he could not pitch into a pick-up truck, said, "this church is all we have now."

The next night a "survivor's dinner" was held at the Colombo Club. Some 750 parishioners came for a joyous yet tearful celebration of life. Parishioners from St. Raymond in Dublin, St. Perpetua in Lafayette, St. Monica in Moraga and St. Joseph in Fremont, prepared the spaghetti dinner. Students from Holy Names High and St. Mary's High helped serve.

Even before getting back to his own rectory and church, Monsignor was working to heal the spirits of his still-hurting congregation. He enlisted the aid of pastoral assistant Sister Diane Denke and school principal Sister Barbara Bray, to organize the help of parishioners to assist the fire victims. One of the first major efforts was by Linda Boero, Bridget Harris and Anne Rynders who organized a massive clothing drive with generous contributions from local businesses and organizations. Maureen Querio and Jean Wong developed a program that linked people in need with parishioners who could help find resources for them. The Parish Council recognized that many parishioners would lack knowledge about insurance, contracting and other issues when they were ready to rebuild their homes; under the leadership of Don Javete and Carolyn Scott, they set up a series of seminars where people could get this information.

Many families had lost bibles, crucifixes, rosaries and statues that were family treasures. Recognizing the need for symbols of faith, Monsignor set up a drive to replace such treasures under the direction of Mary Lou Campi, herself a fire victim. With much parish help she itemized what each family most missed, and managed to find religious supplies that met their needs.

Student-to-student help came from children at several Diocesan elementary schools. For example, St. Lawrence O'Toole School sent art and crafts items for their counterparts at St. Theresa. And students

at St. Isidore in Danville sent dozens of Halloween costumes for children who might have lost theirs in the fire.

Emotional needs received a great deal of attention. Monsignor Moran got Catholic Counseling involved, setting up programs for children and adults, and the school brought in a crisis intervention team to teach faculty members how to deal with children who had lost their homes. Two years after the firestorm, St. Theresa continued to provide therapist-led groups for St. Theresa parishioners who needed them.

Characteristically, Monsignor Moran took no credit for turning the parish into a sanctuary for fire victims. "Never have I seen a community work so well on the important things and not get bogged down in petty things. I think this was collaborative ministry at its best. The ideas and the best plans we implemented were not mine; they were the ideas of the people."

The first few years after the firestorm were bittersweet for the parish. Many long-time parishioners lacked the strength to rebuild after losing everything. In some cases they moved miles away from their memories. But as new houses sprouted up all over the hills, many new families moved in and many of these were young families with children. St. Theresa Parish began to get younger.

On the first anniversary of the firestorm, Monsignor put the painting of St. Theresa on an easel in the sanctuary. In his homily he said that the painting had become a symbol of hope for the whole parish. Other parishioners brought blackened and broken religious statues that they had recovered from the ashes of their homes: a statue of St. Francis brought by Frank Farley, a statue of the Blessed Mother brought by Janice and Michael Holland, and a porcelain Infant Jesus by Arline and Paul Cowell.

As the millennium year 2000 approached, bringing with it the 75th anniversary of the parish, Monsignor Moran wanted to add those key elements to the church that would make it an even more inspirational place for worship. He also wanted the new elements to reflect his parishioners' intensified interest in St. Theresa, The Little Flower. He set up a committee under Hugh Louderback to recommend a way to make the church more beautiful, and they immediately suggested new, stained glass windows to replace the existing yellow-tinted glass. But there was no money to fund them.

The money came in the form of a memorial gift from John Anderson, a parishioner who had lost his home in the fire. Like many others in that time of stress, he found consolation in the church, and in gratitude he left St. Theresa's a sum that would cover much of the cost of the new windows. Designed by artist Peter Mollica, the windows are very modern, offering broad panels of liturgical colors that reflect the light into the church. Throughout each window bits of red are scattered here and there as if rose petals had floated onto the design. The intent, of course, was to remind worshippers of their patron saint who had promised to "send down a shower of roses."

Then came the lighting fixtures in the church and in the vestibule designed to evoke the flowers themselves. Finally a gift from an anonymous donor made it possible to add an electronic carillon, calling worshippers to prayer and bringing sacred music to outdoor celebrations. The carillon sounded for the first time on Christmas Eve, 1999, as the Holy Year Door (Sancta Porta) was opened. With great anticipation, the church was ready for its 75th anniversary and for celebration of the holy year.

Actress Maggie Mahrt plays St. Theresa in a production of *The Story of a Soul* in the sanctuary. At year-end 2000, Miss Mahrt announced her plans to enter a Carmelite convent.



The firestorm of 1991 destroyed the homes of 240 parishioners—one third of the people in the parish. All that remained on many blocks were chimneys and charred trees.

CHAPTER 9

ST. THERESA COMES HOME

During 1999, Monsignor Moran and the parish council began plans for the 75th anniversary of the parish. There would be an anniversary Mass, of course, and they'd ask Bishop Cummins to be celebrant. A parish dinner dance. A picnic. A special remembrance of St. Theresa on her feast day. And what else? Monsignor and the Council felt something was lacking.

The phone call came to Monsignor Moran in late summer. The relics of St. Theresa were on an unprecedented worldwide tour. They were scheduled to stop at a Carmelite house of studies in Berkeley on January 12, 2000. But the building was small and the Carmelites had recommended St. Theresa Church as a replacement venue. The visitation would only last for four hours, but it would be the only stop for the relics in the Oakland Diocese. Would Monsignor Moran be willing to host the relics on that day? He looked at the enigmatic smile on the painting of St. Theresa on the wall just outside his office and he said yes.

Later, as the visitation time neared, Monsignor and the parish council would come to realize that the event was going to require a tremendous amount of work by dozens of parishioners. News of huge crowds at other American visitation sites began to filter back. Parking, traffic management, crowd control all became major concerns. One participant likened the logistics planning to that for a large military operation.

But first, Monsignor Moran was concerned about educating parishioners about St. Theresa. He was a long-time devotee of the 19th century saint, but anticipated that many in his flock would have only a vague recollection of whom she was. In September 1996 he had conducted three days of prayer in honor of the worldwide centenary celebration of the "Little Flower", but that was three years ago. The parish needed a refresher course.

First he asked another devotee of St. Theresa, Father Luke Buckles, OP, to give the homily at all Masses on her feast day in 1999; Father Luke would explain how an obscure cloistered nun could have affected so many millions around the world with her "Little Way." A parish couple generously offered to purchase multiple copies of her autobiography *Story of a Soul* so that parishioners could borrow the books and read her words themselves. St. Theresa School had class discussions and art projects about the coming visitation.

Finally, another unexpected opportunity came from the secular Carmelites of Berkeley. They had heard about the possible local appearance of a one-woman play based on the life of St. Theresa. Would St. Theresa parish be willing to sponsor it? The response was overwhelmingly affirmative and Monsignor asked Dan Scannell to chair it.

The play *Therese: The Story of a Soul* was scheduled for a December Sunday afternoon in the church. The Production Company, St. Luke Productions of Beaverton Oregon, had only one date on their already crowded North American tour, and the Parish Council quickly agreed to it though there was some concern about conflicts with holiday parties. It turned out to be a baseless worry. Tickets went on sale three weeks before the performance and were sold out immediately. Once every seat in every pew was sold, seats were also sold for the choir and orchestra areas.

At 4:00 p.m. on December 5 the audience was treated to a performance unlike anything ever seen in St. Theresa Church. St. Luke Productions had transformed the sanctuary into a dramatic set through the use of stage lighting and large backdrops. Over an excellent sound system came the recorded sounds of a full orchestra played a score written for the production by Sister Marie Therese Sokol, OCD. On the stage, playing St. Theresa from a script derived from the saint's autobiography, was a young Catholic actress named Maggie Mahrt. At the end of the play parishioners had the unusual experience of rising in the church to give the performance a standing ovation.

Afterward there were tears and thanks for all involved. One teenage girl asked, "How could she have loved God so much?" Another woman wrote a thank you note in which she said, "I brought my mother and my whole family to the performance, and we were all touched. Thank you for an experience we'll never forget."

As the day of the visitation grew nearer, Monsignor Moran and chair Glenn Wilpolt got more and more people involved. A call by parishioner Joe Salamack to the Oakland police to notify them of the event led to so many questions that Monsignor eventually hired three uniformed officers to guide traffic. A call to Holy Names High School asking for the "loan" of some parking spaces led to a call for better lighting on the path between the High School and the church; parishioner Jim Breske, a contractor, installed a temporary generator and electric lights to make the walkway safe. Other problems found other volunteers willing to step in.

By the early afternoon of January 12, residents around St. Theresa Church were aware that something unusual was happening. Every street parking place within a half-mile radius was taken. By three p.m. when the van bearing the relics approached the church down Mandalay it passed a steady stream of automobiles driving onto the St. Theresa parish to drop off worshippers. Newspaper writers covering the story were to estimate that between 4,000 and 5,000 people came to the church during the four hours of veneration. Those who were on the steps, or in the vestibule, or in the church, or among the 400 people downstairs in the church hall watching on closed circuit television, came from communities all over Northern California. One couple had come all the way from Minnesota to venerate the relics. People spoke Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese and a dozen other languages. Father O'Kelley's dream of a shrine to St. Theresa attracting pilgrims from around the world had become real for one day, 75 years later.

The procession into the church was impressive. Knights of Columbus, St. Peter Claver and The Knights and Dames of Malta, clad in their ceremonial robes and hats, formed an honor guard. Six men carried the reliquary itself, a 300-pound wood and gilded silver box covered by clear Plexiglas. Leading the way was St. Theresa student Elizabeth Harris carrying the portrait of St. Theresa that usually hangs in the rectory. Today it had a place of honor.

Despite the crush of thousands attempting to touch the reliquary in the sanctuary, Monsignor Moran's first thought was to the children of St. Theresa—all 291 of them. They were in the front pews of the church and he directed most of his remarks to them. "St. Theresa believed that doing little things for others for the love of God could make a big difference," he said. "When you come to the reliquary to pay your respects, I ask you to say the last words St. Theresa said before she died: 'My God, I love you.'"

After the children left the church, hundreds of people led by Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown began the slow journey down the aisles so they could venerate the relics. As they inched their way to the front of the line, most bowed their heads in prayer. Others kissed the Plexiglas cover. Some touched it with crucifixes, rosaries, and pictures of loved ones, or left roses or rose petals. A few pregnant women placed their stomachs against the glass, seeking a blessing for their unborn. "We live in such a secular world that this incredible show of faith was startling," said Terry Wilpolt who witnessed many of the events. "The sense of spirituality was everywhere."

A reporter for the Catholic Voice talked to parishioner Joelle Stallone at the ceremony. Joelle told the reporter that she and her husband Michael had had a baby boy born with health problems three years before, and Monsignor Moran had urged her and her husband to pray to St. Theresa for help. Joelle had brought her now healthy son Kevin to see the reliquary. With them was Kevin's robust one-and-one-half year old brother, Mathew. "We wanted to say thank you," she explained.

After Mass was over and the reliquary had been carried back to the van to be whisked away to Marin County for the next visit, a large crowd stood in the parking lot talking about all that they had heard and seen. Parishioner Patrick Scannell nodded his head. "I think St. Theresa threw us a wonderful 75th anniversary party," he said.

While the visitation of the relics will probably be viewed as the greatest single event in St. Theresa Parish history, other events of the year were also memorable. An anniversary dinner dance at the Greek Orthodox Community Center, a parish picnic for past and present parishioners and the anniversary Mass, among other observances, drew joyous crowds. In one of the most memorable events, on December 10, 2000, more than 200 people from the parish community made a pilgrimage to St. Mary's Church in downtown Oakland. The prayerful group brought hymns, prayers and clothing for a homeless shelter, all in celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000 and our own 75th anniversary.

The first 75 years of St. Theresa Parish history were filled with demonstrations of faith and human drama, and the future holds great promise. For many of us, the symbol of the parishes' past, present and future is the 75-year-old painting of St. Theresa that survived the firestorm of 1991, and hangs in the rectory where it welcomes each and every new parishioner.



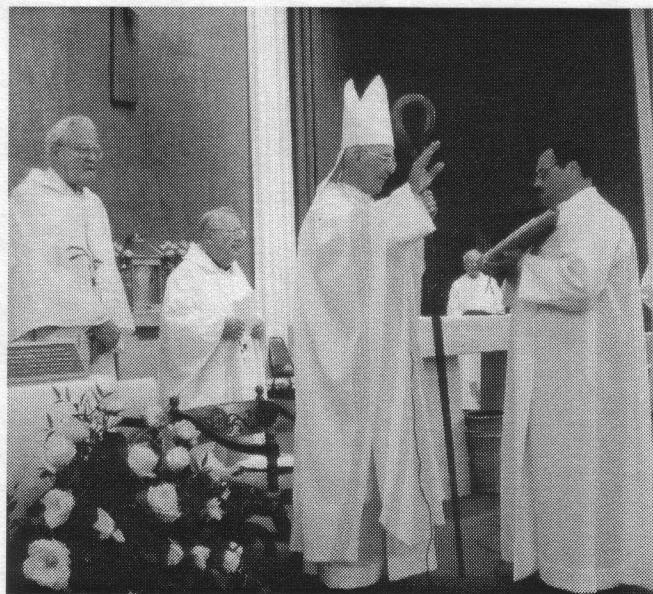
St. Theresa student Elizabeth Harris carried the portrait of St. Theresa up the stairs into the church. Following her were six ushers bearing the Plexiglas-covered reliquary.



Monsignor Moran blesses the reliquary as it stands on the altar steps. In the background, a capacity crowd of worshippers awaits the chance to visit the relics of St. Theresa.



Bishop Cummins takes advantage of a 75th anniversary occasion to visit with old friends, in this case parishioners Frank and Dee Mansell.



Bishop John Cummins celebrates Mass on the 75th anniversary of the parish. He is joined by former pastor, Monsignor Michael J. Lucid, left, and Monsignor Bernard Moran, center.