



CENTRAL WASHINGTON CATHOLIC

El Católico de Washington Central

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JULY 2020 *Letter*

Two 'Sons of Ireland' Mark 60 Years of Priesthood in Yakima Diocese

By Christine Corbett Conklin

In a harrowing journey, in August 1960, seven sons of Ireland made their way to Central Washington. This summer, Father Seamus Kerr and Father John O'Shea, the only surviving priests of that original, newly ordained group, celebrate 60 years of service to the Diocese of Yakima.

It was quite an experience, that first trip to America, recalls Father Kerr, 91. For starters, the flight to New York City was considerably delayed. The people who were designated to meet the arriving priests in New York

gave up and went home. So, when the priests finally arrived, in "the worst heat wave in 50 years," all of the hotels were booked and there was nowhere to go. After being rescued by the cousin of one of the priests who lived in the city, they were caught in traffic due to a flash flood, he said. Finally, on a plane headed for Chicago, one of the plane's engines caught on fire. And, before they could arrive in Yakima, unbelievably, another engine caught on fire.

"It was all part of the experience," Father Kerr calmly recalls. However, "it was paradise when we got into Yakima."

Father Kerr, who hails from Belfast in the North of Ireland, went on to serve as pastor and/or associate pastor in parishes from Holy Family, Yakima; to St. Andrew, Ellensburg; St. Joseph, Waterville; Holy Trinity, Goldendale; St. Joseph, White Salmon; Holy Apostles, East Wenatchee; St. Mary, Mansfield; and St. Rose of Lima, Ephrata. Currently, he is in residence in East Wenatchee.

Father O'Shea, 90, who hails from County Cork, in "the good part of Ireland," the South, remembers having qualms

about seeing all of the "Quaker State" signs along the roadside when he first arrived in the Diocese. How was a Catholic priest going to fare with so many Quakers around, he wondered?

However, he had earlier been inspired

by another sign on the door of All Hallows Seminary in Dublin on the day of their ordination. "Go teach all nations," the sign said.

Father O'Shea has served as pastor or associate pastor for St. Joseph, Sunnyside; St. Patrick, Granger; St. Paul Cathedral and Holy Family, Yakima; Christ the King, Richland; and Holy Spirit, Kennewick. He also has been spiritual

director for the English-speaking Cursillo for our Diocese. Currently, he resides at Parkview Assisted Living in Kennewick.

After ordination, it was difficult to travel "so far away from home and family" and, as a new priest, to not be allowed to travel back to Ireland for three years, Father O'Shea said. In those days, international communication was not what it is today and a letter to or from family could take about two weeks to reach its destination. In more recent years, both he and Father Kerr have returned to Ireland many times to visit.

Father Kerr says that it's "unbelievable" that the years have gone by so fast, "but it's wonderful." He and Father O'Shea are the "last two living" of the seven classmates who traveled to America together in 1960, he said, with four other priests having died and one having left the priesthood.

There have been many "kind and generous people" throughout his 60 years of ministry, Father Kerr said, plus some memorable moments such as driving in snow and fog to small mission churches to say Mass; celebrating the centennial anniversary for Holy Trinity Church; and

saying Mass in an old YMCA building in Ellensburg for 14 years before the present church was built.

"I've been very happy," he concluded. "I've enjoyed all of the years I've spent in this Diocese ... I enjoyed everywhere I

went ... If I would live my life over again, I'd probably do the same thing."

Looking back through the years, Father O'Shea recalled that he was never told that he would need to speak Spanish when he came to the Yakima Diocese, so he arrived not knowing a word of the language. A translator would

assist him at Mass in a farm worker camp. One Sunday, "a big argument developed in the middle of Mass" between the translator and a couple attending Mass. "I didn't understand what they were saying," Father remembered. He later found out that the couple thought that the translator "was putting a spin" on Father's words.

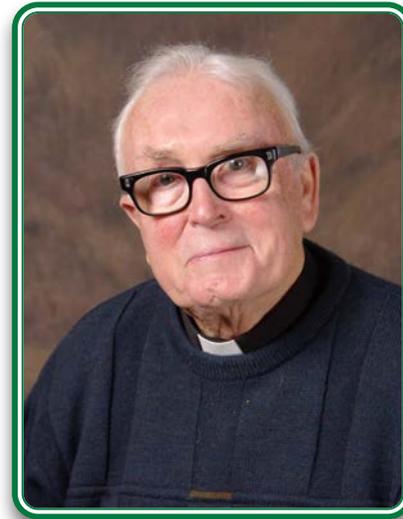
Yet, there has been much satisfaction in his ministry, "helping people, especially those who need help, the sick and the elderly," he said.

"One of the questions that I am often asked is, 'Father, why did you become a priest?'" Father O'Shea said. "The answer is pretty simple: God called me." He admits, though, that, part way through his seminary training, he began to have doubts about his vocation. Going to his spiritual advisor for counsel, and wondering if he should leave, he was told, "'Wait until we throw you out,' and they never threw me out," he recalled with a chuckle.

Happy anniversary and many thanks to these two outstanding priests who have dedicated their lives to the people of our Diocese. Please keep them and all of our clergy and religious in your prayers.



Father John O'Shea



Father Seamus Kerr

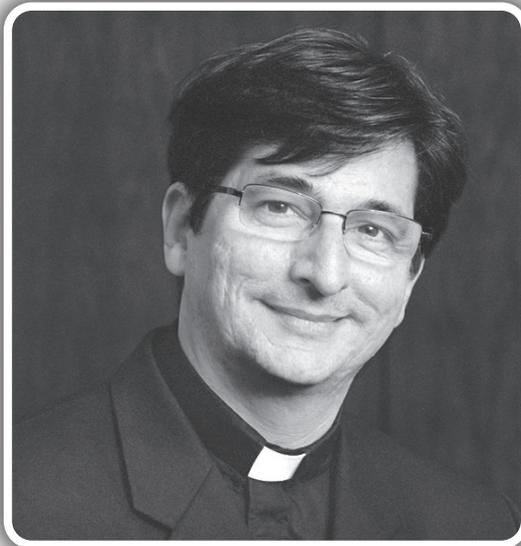
A Message from Bishop Tyson...

Dear Friends:

Welcome to another online edition of the *Central Washington Catholic* newsletter. I'm also sending this by email to everyone who has provided their address through the Annual Catholic Appeal. My special thanks for all of you, too! Especially to those of you stepping up and giving in a way that makes up for those who can't, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who would have thought six months ago that we would be in this situation today? I am so very grateful for the many ways so many of our priests embrace Facebook as well as other social media to provide Mass as well as some local pastoral outreach across our 40 parishes here in Central Washington. I'm also grateful for the nearly 3,000 households that have jumped onto FORMED – our Catholic “Netflix” platform – staying spiritually fed through the nearly 300 films, videos, music and e-books.

All of our parishes are slowly implementing Flocknote as a way to keep you informed about your local parish, as well. Of course, I'm also grateful to our Catholic Radio outreach with stations and repeaters in Spanish and English across two dozen transmitters here in Central Washington. I am happy to see folks jumping onto our diocesan Facebook and webpage as well as our launch of MAGNIFICAT on Facebook in Spanish and English. I'm grateful for our televised



Bishop Joseph Tyson

Masses on CW9 in English as well as TV Azteca in Spanish. But who would have thought we would be doing this?

All the more reason to uplift the 60 years of priesthood for Fr. Jack O'Shea and Fr. Seamus Kerr. I was up for a Mass with Fr. Kerr recently at Holy Apostles in East Wenatchee. When Fr. Kerr first came to the United States as a missionary from Ireland, he was assigned to St. Joseph in Waterville. There were TWO priests there at that time. One served the small mission in East Wenatchee! Who would have thought that the mission would become one of the largest parishes in the Diocese?

It's good to remember and thank our senior priests such as Fr. Kerr and Fr.

O'Shea. They have lived through a lot of history. They are of an age where they can recall family stories about the last pandemic – the flu of 1918 – which killed more American troops than in the First World War! Who would have thought?

Being long-term and seasoned servants of God, our senior priests remind us that nothing is forever, that lots can happen in any given lifetime and that God is present with us now in this pandemic just as he has been present in the past.

We are slowly opening up – albeit in fits and starts along the I-82 corridor – but we know that what we face now will not go on forever.

Let's look to our senior priests for inspiration in staying faithful to Christ even in the challenges of today, knowing that someday we can look back on this event and see Christ's footprints alongside ours, walking the path of this current moment.

Many blessing and prayers to all of you. Thanks for your support in this new format of parish and diocesan ministry. I look forward to seeing you all face to face at some point in the future, too.

With every best wish and blessing,

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Sister Isabel Doñate Elected Superior General of Her Order

Sister Maria Isabel Doñate Valdez has been named the new Superior General of the Missionary Social Workers of the Church, a religious congregation founded in Mexico, less than a year after graduating from Catholic Extension's U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange program.

The program funds religious sisters from Latin American congregations to minister among Latino immigrant populations in poor regions of the U.S. The program is funded in part by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Sister Isabel worked in the Diocese of Yakima for several years, an area where Catholic Extension is working cooperatively with the Diocese to build up transformative faith communities. Here, she primarily served migrant farm workers.

She also took classes to develop pastoral leadership skills. The program, which to date has included over 75 sisters, is intended to not only advance the Church's ministry to those on the margins of U.S. society, but also seeks to help religious congregations in Latin America to develop new

leadership through ministry experience and education.

Sister Isabel said that the Catholic Extension program “was of great importance in my vocation as a Missionary Social Worker of the Church. Thanks to this experience, I was able to work with our migrant brothers and sisters in the fields. I was able to see that even in a developed country like the U.S. there is still so much need—spiritually, humanly, and socially—among those that pick our crops in the summertime. It was so fulfilling to be able to listen to them and celebrate the Eucharist with them.”

Sister Isabel identifies first and foremost as a missionary. In a recorded interview with Catholic Extension in March 2018, she said, “I firmly believe, wherever I go, I'll always be an immigrant. As missionaries, we don't have land, we don't have a place of our own. Our only land and our only place are where there are people in need. They open a place for us to come to offer words of hope.”

Catholic Extension and the Diocese

If you have been abused or victimized by a member of the Catholic clergy, please believe in the possibility for hope and help and healing. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Yakima Diocese has a sexual abuse hotline for those who wish to report some incident concerning that issue as regards a bishop, priest, deacon or diocesan employee or volunteer. (888) 276-4490

is honored to have shared in the journey of this inspiring sister. As she transitions from farm fields to leadership, we wish her many prayers and blessings as she commences her six-year term as superior.

NOTE: This article was reprinted, in part, from www.catholicextension.org.

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Priests Receive New Assignments, Effective Summer and Fall

Following consultation earlier this year with the Priest Personnel Board, Bishop Joseph Tyson has announced the following assignment changes for priests of the Diocese of Yakima, with most taking place October 1. The Bishop thanks the priests for their willingness to accept these assignments as he discerns how best to meet the needs of the Diocese, the parishes, and the priests themselves. Please keep them in your prayers.

EFFECTIVE JULY 1

Newly ordained **Father Edgar Quiroga** is now a parochial vicar of Christ the King Parish in Richland.

Father Tomás Vázquez, formerly pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Kennewick, is now on sabbatical to study scriptural languages in the Holy Land.

EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1

Father Daniel Steele, formerly a parochial vicar of Christ the King, will be a parochial vicar of Holy Family Parish in Yakima part time, while teaching part time in the Magnificat adult faith formation program.

Father Michael Ibach will be a parochial vicar of Holy Family Parish for sacramental ministry while continuing

full time as Judicial Vicar of the Diocese, directing the Office of Canonical Concerns.

EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1

Father César Izquierdo, finishing his studies in Rome in Public Ethics and the Social Doctrine of the Church, will be parochial vicar of St. Joseph in Kennewick.

Father Jesús Mariscal, finishing his studies in Rome in Canon Law, will be parochial vicar of St. Paul Cathedral in Yakima.

Father Juan Flores, parochial vicar of Christ the King, will continue in residence at the Richland parish while assuming the role of Administrator of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish in Benton City.

Father Felix Rodriguez, now parochial vicar of Resurrection Parish in Zillah, will be administrator of St. Aloysius Parish in Toppenish.

Monsignor Robert Siler, now administrator of Resurrection Parish, will be moderating administrator of St. Aloysius while continuing full time as Episcopal Vicar and Chancellor.

Father Jacob Davis, now administrator of St. Joseph in Kennewick, will be pastor of Resurrection Parish.

pastor of St. Andrew Parish, will be pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Chelan, St. Anne Parish in Bridgeport, and St. Mary Mission in Mansfield,



while establishing a canonical services office in the northern deaneries and continuing his work in the Office of Canonical Concerns as Defender of the Bond in marriage nullity cases.

Father Rogelio (Roy) Gutiérrez, now pastor of the Chelan and Bridgeport parishes and Mansfield mission, will be pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Sunnyside.

Father Thomas Bunnell, S.J., now pastor of St. Joseph in Sunnyside, will depart the Diocese to reside at the Jesuit community in Portland and to serve in parishes as assigned by his superiors.

Father Felipe Pulido, now pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Yakima, will be pastor of St. Joseph in Kennewick, while continuing to serve as Vicar of Vocations and Director of Seminarians.

Father Mauricio Muñoz, now pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Ephrata, will be pastor of St. Joseph in Yakima, and will serve as Assistant Director of Seminarians.

Father José Herrera, now pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Grandview, will be pastor of St. Rose of Lima in Ephrata.

Father Jesús Alatorre, now parochial vicar of St. Paul Cathedral, will be pastor of Blessed Sacrament in Grandview.

Please keep all of our priests in your continuing prayers as they face the daily challenges of ministering during the coronavirus epidemic.

Father Jaime Chacón, now pastor of St. Aloysius Parish, will be pastor of St. Andrew Parish in Ellensburg while continuing his work as Vicar for Adult Faith Formation and Director of Hispanic Ministry.

Father David Jiménez, now

Visit our Website!

Faith Education Funding Available

College Scholarships Religious Education Programs Tuition Assistance

Welcome New Foundation Director

The *Central Washington Catholic Foundation* would like to welcome **Nicole St. Mary-Franson** as the new Executive Director. Nicole looks forward to leading the Foundation in Catholic philanthropy and to pass the Faith heritage to future generations through scholarships, religious education support, and tuition assistance to the 40 parishes and seven Catholic schools in the Yakima Diocese.

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NEWS

From Around the Diocese

CCHD Collection Helps PREPARES

Parishes in the Diocese of Yakima will be taking up the annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) collection August 15-16. There are 40 million people in the United States living in poverty. This collection supports programs that empower local communities to address the challenges they face, including the PREPARES program which supports women, their families and their children from conception through the first five years of a child's life.

The CCHD supports those living in poverty across the country. It identifies and addresses the unique obstacles people face as they work to lift themselves out of poverty. In addition, 25 percent of the funds we collect will remain in our Diocese to fund local anti-poverty projects (\$25,000 was donated to the Light of Hope Fund earlier this year to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic).

By supporting this collection, you are giving those on the margins a hand up, not a handout. Please be generous. Donations also can be sent directly to:

Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Office of National Collections

United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops

P. O. Box 96278

Washington DC 20090-6278

Medjugorje Pilgrimage Cancelled

Regrettably, the pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Bosnia, scheduled for October 28 to November 10, has been cancelled.

Father Richard Sedlacek, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Selah, who was to serve as spiritual director on this journey, informed the Central Washington Catholic of the cancellation this week. Pandemic travel restrictions and subsequent, limited signups for the pilgrimage led to the decision.

Anyone who registered for the trip may receive more information by contacting Gary at (877) 333-9290.

Publicize Your Event

When this time of social distancing is over, does your Catholic organization or parish have an event planned which is open to the public? *The Central Washington Catholic* staff would be happy to consider publicizing your upcoming function!

Send your information to robert.siler@yakimadiocese.org by the first of the month in which you would like your information to run.

Inside or Outside: Where Will Mass Be Next?

If you're having a little difficulty figuring out where the next Mass or other sacrament will be held in your parish – inside or outside – you're not alone. Representatives of the Diocese of Yakima and area parishes say that they, too, are having challenges keeping up with changing health department and governmental regulations.

"It's a balance between allowing our parishioners to live out the Faith and following health guidelines designed to stem the coronavirus pandemic," observed Monsignor Robert Siler, Episcopal Vicar and Moderator of the Curia for the Diocese of Yakima.

"With regulations varying from county to county, and sometimes switching back and forth, this is not an easy task," he said. Currently, some 20 parishes within the Diocese are allowed to have limited indoor gatherings, while 20 parishes (in Yakima, Benton and Chelan counties, for example) are limited to outdoor gatherings only.

Bishop Joseph Tyson had given the okay for additional indoor Masses to begin just after the Fourth of July, but had to withdraw that permission after the health districts in two counties received clarification from the state health department.

"It's very confusing and stressful," said Monsignor John Ecker, pastor of St. Paul Cathedral and Vicar General of the Diocese. A couple of weeks ago, "we had our hopes that we'd be inside" again for Mass, then new instructions were issued prohibiting indoor Masses in Yakima and "we have to refocus everything," he said.

To have an outdoor Mass, it's necessary to move a portable altar, pulpit, public address system, camera equipment for streaming the Mass and microphones for music, for example, to the church courtyard. Parishioners also need to be notified of changes and advised to bring their own chairs, Monsignor explained.

Thus far, at the Cathedral, there has been only about a 25 percent return of parishioners to Mass, he suggested. "I sympathize with people who don't feel comfortable coming," including older parishioners who may have particular

concerns, he said.

For the sign-up process required for limited Mass attendance, "some people are kind of reluctant to share their info, such as name and phone number," added Marisela Valencia, office manager for St. Joseph Church in Kennewick. Others don't understand why a nearby church is allowed to have indoor Mass, while their

parish cannot. For example, in the Tri-Cities, Richland had one indoor Mass and then instructions changed; Kennewick had submitted a plan to begin indoor Masses but never got to do this; while Pasco, in Franklin County and the Diocese of Spokane, has



About half the parishes of the Yakima Diocese are limited to outdoor Masses.

been having some indoor services.

For outdoor Masses, "one of the biggest challenges is getting volunteers to set up," Valencia said. At first, when outdoor Masses began, there was a good response from volunteers, but lately, that response has been waning, she observed.

At St. Joseph, two of the four outdoor weekend Masses are usually at capacity, with 100 people attending each, while the other two Masses draw about 70 to 80 people each. Some parishioners watch livestream Masses which the church offers. For some of the elderly, it's difficult to sit out in the summer heat and/or lug a chair to Mass, Valencia suggested.

Parishes which are allowed to have indoor Masses also have their challenges, with social distancing and mask requirements, plus other changes in procedures.

"We will continue to do our best to stay abreast of health regulations, offer parishioners all of the services we can, and keep everyone informed," Monsignor Siler said. "We are grateful that now, at least we can offer Mass in some location in each of our parishes and, as we wait for life to become a bit more normal, perhaps this is a good time to practice the virtues of charity, patience and humility."

While concerns about wearing masks and providing contact tracing information are normal, he added, they are important tools in the fight against the coronavirus. "For the common good of all, let's look at our cooperation as a spiritual sacrifice," he said.

A Bed of One's Own: PREPARES Makes A Difference



A new bed brought excitement for a young girl.

She finally has her own bed! One of our PREPARES families had to move to a new place, and they had no bed for their little girl. PREPARES does not often have beds to offer, as there is no room to store them, but providentially, a friend of PREPARES had a toddler bed to donate, just when the need arose. Love makes the world go 'round!