

DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



FILLING LIVES WITH HOPE

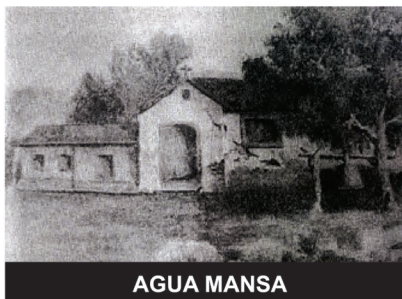
40

# I. The Early History

While the Diocese of San Bernardino is still relatively young having been started in 1978, the presence of the Catholic Church in the area can be traced to the 1700's. The early history of the Diocese of San Bernardino began with the founding of the California Missions (1769-1823). As Spain sought to expand into Alta California, the Franciscan, Saint Junipero Serra was designated to build the Missions, so the Catholic faith could be introduced to the native peoples. San Gabriel Mission built in 1771 was the fourth Mission founded and the closest Mission to the Inland Empire.

Capt. Juan Bautista Anza left Sonora, Mexico seeking a land link to the San Gabriel Mission. It was during this expedition that the first Mass in the present day Diocese was celebrated near Riverside on March 21, 1774 by Rev. Francisco Garces, who had accompanied Capt. Anza on the expedition.

The name "*San Bernardino*" was also associated with the San Gabriel Mission. In 1810, Rev. Francisco Dumetz left the Mission seeking to establish chapels to the east. During his travels, he decided to build a chapel in a beautiful valley. Fr. Dumetz named the valley "*San Bernardino*" in honor of St. Bernardine of Siena, whose feast day it was on May 20, 1810.



**AGUA MANSA**

In 1842 a group of farmers left Abiquiu, New Mexico seeking new land and followed the Sante Fe Trail settling along the Santa Ana River in today's south Colton. The new community was named Aqua Mansa. After the new state of California was created in 1850, Bishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany of the Diocese of Monterrey named one of his first parishes, San

Salvador de Jurupa in 1852, near Aqua Mansa. The pastor was Rev. Amable Petithomme, SSCC.

After the Mormons left the San Bernardino valley in 1857 to return to Utah, the city of San Bernardino began to grow. St. Bernardine Parish was founded in 1862 and is today the oldest parish in the Diocese. Rev. P.J. Stockman (1874-1895) pastor at St. Bernardine was a gifted missionary and builder. In 1886, he began a mission in Riverside named St. Francis de Sales, which would become a full parish in 1893 when Riverside County was formed.

The southern part of California developed



**ST. BERNARDINE**

more slowly than northern California. In 1880, there are only 11,000 people in Los Angeles, while there are 185,000 Catholics in the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

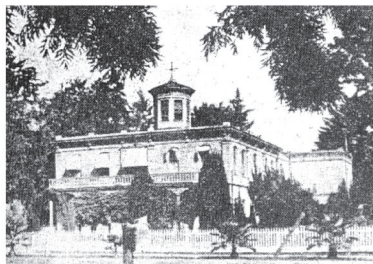
The early commitment to Catholic education was evident with the founding of St. Catherine Convent School in San Bernardino (1880) and the elementary school at Sacred Heart Parish in Redlands started by Msgr. Thomas Fitzgerald (1895-1930) in 1897. Two high schools were begun in the 1920's: St. Bernardine High School in San Bernardino and St. Francis de Sales High School in Riverside.

As the United States government focused on the needs of Native Americans and their reservations, Bishop Francis Mora of the Monterrey-Los Angeles Diocese opened St. Boniface Indian School in Banning (1890). This industrial training school would serve the Native American children and later juvenile youth of the courts for eighty years.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 forced many people to flee Mexico and settle in southern California. The continued growth led to the formation of the new Diocese of Los Angeles-San Diego in 1922. During the 1920's, there were 16 parishes begun in the two counties of San Bernardino and Riverside. St. Bernardine Hospital in San Bernardino is built in 1931, operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

In 1936, San Bernardino and Riverside counties became part of the new Diocese of San Diego. Post World War II brought much growth to the Inland Empire. Between 1945 and 1950, fifteen new parishes were started in the two counties. Guiding the growth of the Catholic Church in the Riverside area was Msgr. Peter Lynch (1934-1974) who was pastor at St. Francis de Sales Parish for four decades. Aquinas High School in San Bernardino and Notre Dame High School in Riverside were both opened in the 1950's.

Responding to the growth in the northern two counties, the Diocese of San Diego opened a regional ministry center in San Bernardino in 1970. Between 1972-1976, a Diocesan Synod was held in San Diego; the executive coordinator was Rev. Phillip Straling. On July 14, 1978, Pope Paul VI created the Diocese of San Bernardino. This new Diocese became



**ST. CATHERINE CONVENT**



**ST. BERNARDINE HOSPITAL**



the 11th Diocese in the state of California, and the 170th Diocese in the United States.



## II. A New Diocese Is Formed

Bishop Phillip Straling was installed as the first Bishop for the Diocese of San Bernardino on November 6, 1978 at the Raincross Convention Center in Riverside. The new Diocese began with 235,000 Catholics, 87 parishes and 111 Diocesan priests. The long drive to San Diego for diocesan meetings had come to an end. There was much excitement and energy as a new local church began to become a reality. One of the senior priests who helped the young Diocese in its early growth was Msgr. John Bradley (1961-1993) who was pastor at St. Bernardine Parish in San Bernardino for 32 years, and was the first Vicar General.



**BISHOP PHILLIP STRALING**

The first Chancery Office was located at 1450 North "D" Street in San Bernardino.

Bishop Straling kept much of the organizational structure that the Diocese of San Diego had developed with the northern regional office in San Bernardino. The first priest ordained for the new Diocese was Rev. Tom Wallace, who later would become an Episcopal Vicar.

One of the major challenges facing Bishop Straling would be the rapid growth in the population of San Bernardino and Riverside counties. With almost a quarter million Catholics, San Bernardino began as a medium size diocese in the United States. The ratio of Baptisms to Funerals was 4:1 in 1980, indicating above average growth. This dynamic would impact the pastoral life of the Diocese for years to come.



**MSGR.  
TOM WALLACE**

Bishop Straling created two new leadership positions in Hispanic Ministry: a Co-chancellor for Hispanic Affairs and an Episcopal Vicar for Hispanic Affairs. These appointments were in response to the disappointment in the Hispanic community that a Hispanic priest was not named as Bishop in San Bernardino.

Another major challenge in the young Diocese was the number of priests available to serve the growing population. In order to encourage vocations, Bishop Straling opened the Junipero Serra House in Riverside. This college level formation house for seminarians would allow the students to remain in the Diocese during the early years of their training.

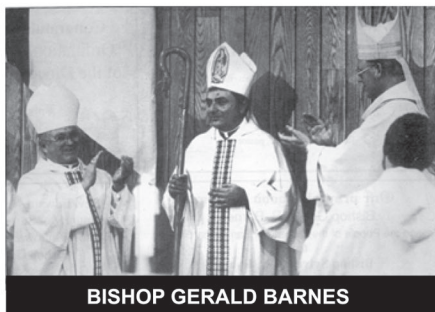
A new commitment to developing the gifts of the baptized members of

the Church began to emerge. Two new schools of lay ministry formation were begun: the Straling Leadership Institute (English) and Escuela de Ministerios (Spanish). Lay ministers began to assume more leadership roles in the parish, including full time positions on the parish staff. New positions such as the Parish Business Manager and Pastoral Associate provided stronger and more effective ministry in larger parish communities.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council initiated a series of planning processes using an annual gathering of priests, sisters and lay leaders to develop new ideas for the young diocese. Bishop Straling gathered his leadership groups to work on diocesan priorities; this included the Priest's Council, Sister's Council, Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. By the 10th Anniversary of the Diocese, the Catholic population had grown to 400,000 people, 92 parishes and 102 diocesan priests.

The ministry of Pastoral Coordinator was established to address the declining number of clergy. This position allows a woman religious, deacon or lay person to be the leader of a parish, supported by a priest moderator and priest minister. Sr. Theresa Harpin, CSJ was the first Pastoral Coordinator in the Diocese assigned to St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Corona in 1989.

In response to a request from Bishop Straling for additional assistance, the Vatican appointed Msgr. Gerald R. Barnes from the Archdiocese of San Antonio as the first Auxiliary Bishop to the Diocese of San Bernardino in 1992. To meet the growing challenges of the young diocese, Bishop Straling initiated a long range Diocesan Planning Process.



Rome announced the transfer of Bishop Phillip Straling to the Diocese of Reno on March 21, 1995. The last priest ordained by Bishop Straling for the Diocese of San Bernardino was Rev. David Andel. The scattered diocesan offices throughout San Bernardino were brought together at a new Diocesan Pastoral Center, located at 1201 Highland Avenue in San Bernardino.



As Bishop Straling left for the Diocese of Reno, the Auxiliary Bishop Gerald Barnes was named as Administrator for the Diocese while awaiting Rome' announcement of a new Diocesan Bishop.

This change of episcopal leadership marked a new stage of development. The youthfulness of the new Diocese had given way to the responsibility of

establishing a Catholic presence in the Inland Empire.

### III. Rapid Growth Calls For A New Vision

Bishop Gerald R. Barnes was appointed the second Diocesan Bishop for the Diocese of San Bernardino on December 28, 1995. He was installed by Cardinal Roger Mahony on March 12, 1996 at the Riverside Convention Center.

Bishop Barnes continued the Diocesan Planning Process with the development of a Diocesan Vision: “We, the Church of San Bernardino, are a community of believers in

Jesus the Christ, called to impact family, neighborhood, and

society with the Gospel so that people's lives are filled with hope.” Bishop Barnes announced the five goals derived from the Planning Process to be implemented over the next five years: family, youth, stewardship, leadership and organizational structures. A new Office of Pastoral Planning would assist with the implementation of these goals.

Responding to the needs of the priests in the Diocese, Bishop Barnes created a new position, Vicar for Clergy; Rev. Ronald Larkin, MSC was the first appointee. A new bi-lingual Ministry Formation Institute was developed in 1998 to continue the formation of lay parish ministers. To guide the ministry and outreach in the Diocese, Bishop Gerald Barnes identified four values: Hospitality, Faith Sharing, Reconciliation and Collaboration.

2000 was a special year in the life of the Diocese. 2200 people attended the Jubilee 2000 Eucharistic Congress held at the Ontario Convention Center.

Bishop Barnes announced a new evangelization effort in the Diocese called Renew. This three year process of faith sharing and leadership development would be done in small group settings. The first Annual Bishop's Dinner was begun at the Palm Springs Convention Center that year.

To support the emerging Filipino, Vietnamese and Korean communities, Bishop Barnes created the





ministry of the Asian-Pacific Islander. Sr. Theresa Phan, LHC was named the first Director. As part of the Jubilee Year, Bishop Barnes issued a special Pastoral Letter on Debt Forgiveness. The Diocese contributed \$4.8 Million toward the forgiveness of several parish and school debts in the Diocese.

The Vatican appointed Msgr. Dennis O'Neil as the second Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of San Bernardino; his ordination was on March 27, 2001. A two-day youth symposium was held in 2002 to provide direction to the newly reorganized youth ministry office. Bishop Barnes published a Pastoral Letter on Sexual Abuse that same year outlining new policies and procedures for all priests, employees and ministry leaders in the Diocese.



In 2003, the Catholic Schools Office sponsored their First Annual Bishop's Classic Golf Tournament in Palm Desert, in order to raise monies to support a scholarship program for needy students. After only two years of serving the Diocese of San Bernardino, Bishop Dennis O'Neil died suddenly on October 17, 2003.

The 25th Anniversary Celebration for the Diocese scheduled for November 2, 2003 for Cal-State University was rescheduled due to a wildfire in the San Bernardino area. Cardinal Roger Mahoney joined Bishop Barnes in celebrating the Anniversary Mass on January 18, 2004. To assist with the governance of the Diocese, Bishop Barnes created a new Episcopal Vicar position. Msgr. Tom Wallace was the first Vicar for Riverside County and the Rev. Robert Miller was the first Vicar for San Bernardino County.



A new St. Junipero Serra House of Formation was built in Grand Terrace, next to Christ the Redeemer Parish. In 2005, the Vatican appointed Rev. Rutilio del Riego, DLP as the third Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese. The next year, a new Catholic High School opened in Palm Desert; its name was Xavier College Prep. Also in 2006, the first Catholic Cemetery was opened in Colton,

named Our Lady Queen of Peace.

In order to better utilize church facilities and available priests, Bishop Barnes established four new parishes through the merger of nine previous parishes in 2006. The Catholic population in the Diocese surpassed one million people, as new housing developments continued to be built in the two counties..

To guide the pastoral life of the Diocese, Bishop Barnes announced five priorities in 2009: preparation of the laity, spiritual life, community

partnerships, church as a prophetic voice in society and our priests. A serious recession in the two counties impacted the church finances in our parishes and schools resulting in reduced staffs and program cutbacks.

In order to strengthen Catholic marriages, the Office of Catechetical Ministry embarked on a new Marriage Education Initiative for the next five years. Catholic Charities celebrated 30 years of service and outreach in the community with an anniversary Mass by Bishop Barnes. The City of San Bernardino celebrated its 200th

Anniversary; having been named after St. Bernardine of Siena by Rev. Francisco Dumetz on May 20, 1810. Bishop Barnes dedicated a special monument in honor of Fr. Dumetz.

In response to emerging pastoral needs, Bishop Barnes initiated a Justice for Immigrants ministry, opened an office for Restorative Justice to serve the incarcerated and began an outreach to young Hispanic adults.

After 45 years of ministry in the Inland Empire, the Sisters of St. Benedict announced the closure of their monastery in Grand Terrace. As the kick off event for the “Year for Youth” (2011-2012), as proclaimed by Bishop Barnes, over 500 people from the Diocese attended World Youth Day with Pope Benedict XVI in Spain.

In recognition of the Diocesan commitment to multicultural ministry, the United States Catholic Conference selected the Diocese of San Bernardino as one of three Dioceses in the United States to pilot a cultural competency program. The continued growth in the Diocese reached 1.5 Million Catholics, making the Diocese of San Bernardino one of the largest Dioceses in the United States.

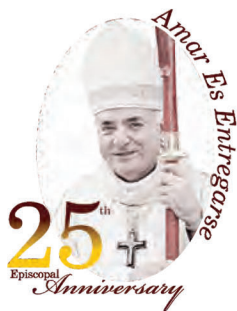
To support the call for a New Evangelization from Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Barnes outlined a new diocesan effort on adult formation and evangelization. St. Bernardine Parish in San Bernardino celebrated its 150th

Anniversary making it the oldest parish in the Diocese. A new diocesan newspaper in Spanish was begun, called “El Compás Católico”.

A new Catholic Education Foundation was created to support the growth of Catholic Schools. In 2016, six new priests was ordained by Bishop Gerald Barnes. This was the largest ordination class in many years. The Diocese would still need the assistance of 50 extern priests from throughout







the world to serve the spiritual needs of its growing population. Auxiliary Bishop Rutilio del Riego, DLP retired in 2015 when he reached the mandatory age of 75.

Bishop Gerald Barnes celebrated his 25th Anniversary as a Bishop in 2017 with numerous gatherings and special Masses.

As the Diocese celebrates its 40th Anniversary in 2018, the Catholic Church in San Bernardino and Riverside continues to be blessed by God with many gifts in service to its vision to impact families, neighborhoods, and society with the Gospel so that people's lives are filled with hope.



**St. Bernardine**  
**Patron of the**  
**Diocese of San Bernardino**  
**Feast Day: May 20**



**Our Lady of Guadalupe**  
**Patroness of the**  
**Diocese of San Bernardino**  
**Feast Day: December 12**