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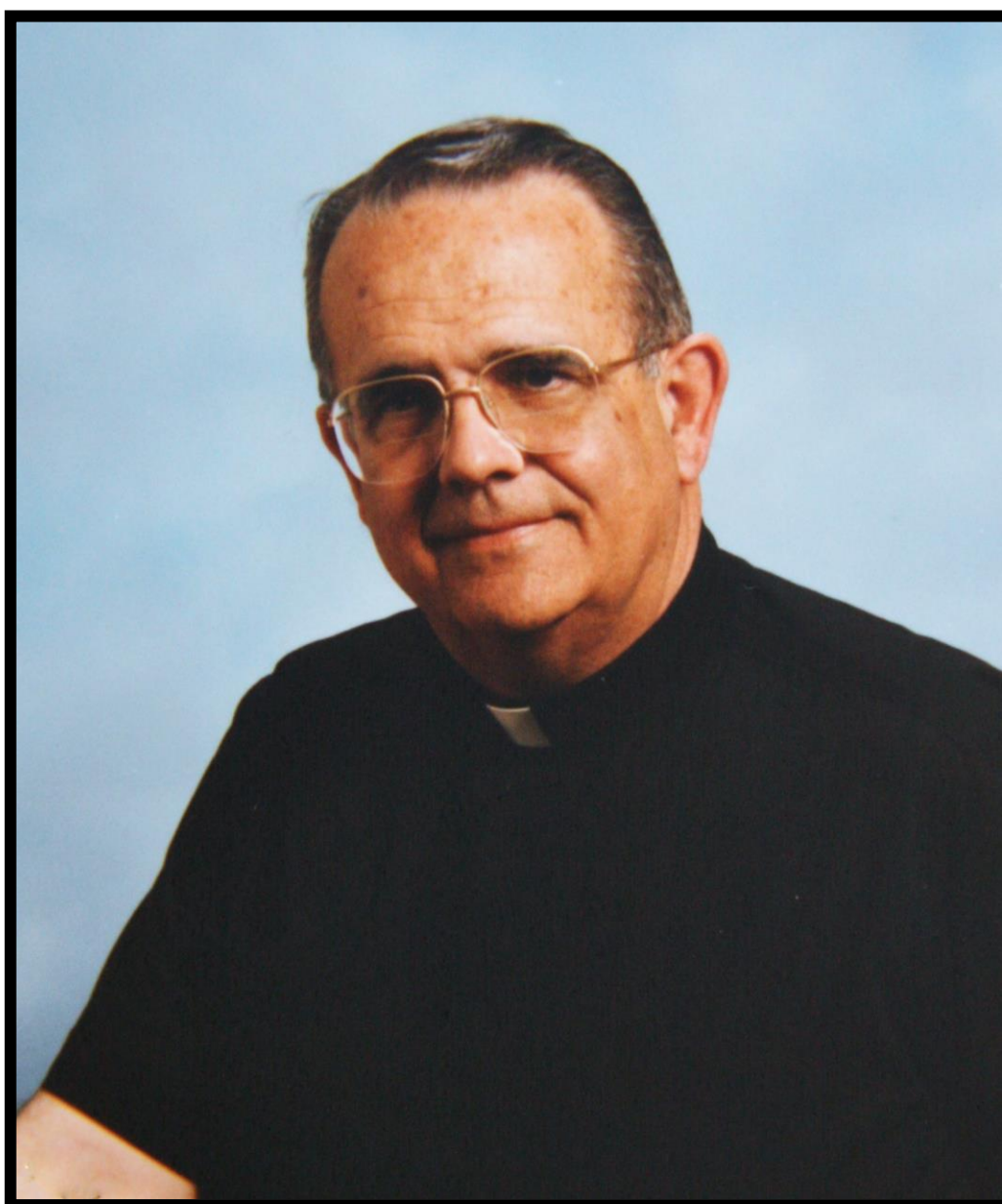
Father Sidney Peter Hall

Native Son of Sacramento

Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Peter Parish, Sacramento

April 2, 1931 -- September 12, 2016



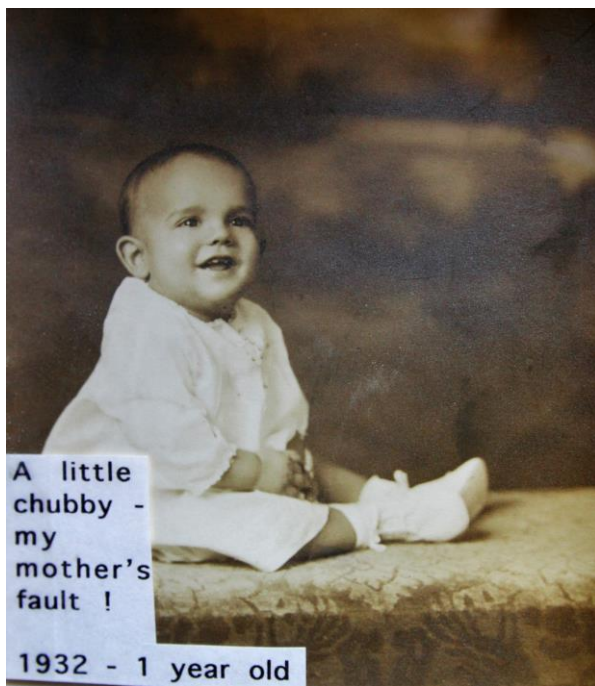


Photo from Sidney Hall

Sidney at Age One Year

Sidney Peter Hall was born on April 2, 1931 at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento. He is the first of six children born to Sidney A Hall and Mary Hicks. There are four boys and two girls in the family. Sid's father was a member of the Baptist Church and his mother was Catholic. The whole family attended the Baptist Church on 24th and L Streets. Mr Hall was a deacon in the church. One Sunday he came into Sunday school class and pulled Sid out of class. He had had a serious disagreement with the pastor and decided to withdraw his family from the church. Sid was about seven when he and his father took a walk and passed by St Francis Church as well as the Pioneer Congregational Church on L Street. Sid's father said, "Let's check this church out" and Sid said, "No let's go see Sutter's Fort."

The Hall Family Converts to Catholicism

Sid's father worked with a fellow employee who was Catholic and after some time he decided to begin instruction in the Catholic faith at St Francis Church. Sid's father and mother became Catholic and Sid, his two brothers and two cousins were also baptized in the Catholic Church. One of Sid's cousins, Howard Hall, became a Franciscan priest and now at 81 years of age, lives in a Franciscan house in Oakland.

Sid Begins School

Sid began his schooling at El Dorado School in Sacramento, kindergarten to third grade, and then switched to Sacred Heart Parish School on 39th and H Streets in Sacramento. He graduated from Sacred Heart School in 1945.

Seminary Training and Ordination

From Sacred Heart School he entered Saint Joseph Minor Seminary in Mountain View where he spent the next six years. From Saint Joseph Seminary, he matriculated to Saint Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park and was ordained a priest by Bishop Joseph McGucken at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on May 11, 1957.



Sidney as a Young Boy

Father Hall Assigned to the Cathedral

Father Sid's first assignment was to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament where he served for nine years. Monsignor Ray Renwald was rector of the cathedral. Bishop Bell, at the advice of Father Bill Slakey, sent Father Sidney to Cuernavaca, Mexico for 15 weeks to study Spanish during his first term at the Cathedral. The head of the institute in Cuernavaca was the famous Father Ivan Illich who prepared priests to work in Latin America. At the institute, there were both clergy and laity taking classes with Father Illich.

Father Hall Requests Permission to Serve in Mexico



Photo from Sidney Hall

Celebrating Mass in Mexico

While serving at the Cathedral, Father Sid worked with LAMP in San Felipe, Baja California. He was able to improve his Spanish speaking ability while there. In 1966, Sid sought permission from Bishop Bell to be released for ministry in Latin America. Pope John XXIII had urged bishops to allow priests to serve in the missions where there was a great need for clergy. At the same time, Maryknoll sent a letter inviting priests to serve in Latin America. It was then that Sid went to Bishop Bell to ask permission to answer the call to serve in Mexico. Bishop Bell responded positively to this request saying: "America received the faith from Mexico so it is only right that we respond to their need now." The bishop released Sid for ministry in Mexico; his only request was that Sid wait until September before he left.

Father Sidney Leaves for Mexico in 1966

Father Sidney left for Mexico in September 1966. He first went to Maryknoll headquarters in New York for a few weeks orientation and then flew to Mexico City. He was greeted by Father Walter Windrich who would be Sid's first pastor. Sid was with Father Walter for at least a year. They lived in an apartment house near the International Airport. The archbishop of Mexico City assigned the Maryknoll community to a parish in the city named *La Sagrada Familia*.

Sid went to the Yucatán for a year to work and then returned to Mexico City. He was appointed assistant pastor at another parish in the city. During his third assignment in Mexico City, Father Sid was appointed pastor of Saint Camilo de Lelis Parish. He served there only one year when his five year commitment to Maryknoll ended and he returned to Sacramento.

Return to Sacramento in 1971

Unknown to Father Sid, a bus load of Sacramento youth had come to the airport to welcome him home. However, on the flight to Sacramento, some mechanical difficulty developed and the plane had to return Los Angeles. The passengers changed to a different plane but when the pilot was ready for takeoff, he noticed a warning light indicating that the back door was not

closed. He returned the plane to boarding where the problem was resolved. The waiting students in Sacramento stayed at the airport until Father Sid finally arrived.

Bishop Bell had intended to assign Sid to Saint Joseph Parish in North Sacramento but the Hispanic community at the Cathedral began to protest saying that they wanted him to return to the Cathedral. Bishop Bell changed the assignment and returned Father Sid to the Cathedral once again.

Father Sid's First Pastorate – Knights Landing

Father Sid had served the Cathedral a couple of years when he received a letter from Father Jake De Andreis in Knights Landing. Jake told Sid that he did not want an Irishman to take over when he left the parish and asked Sid to apply for Knights Landing. Father Sid did apply for the parish and was appointed pastor on July 1, 1973. Sometime later, Jake told Sid that it was a great mistake for him to retire from Knights Landing. When Sid attended a course at Saint Albert Parish in Oakland, he asked Father Jake to fill in for him while he was away and Father De Andreis agreed to do that. When Father Sid returned to Knights Landing he realized that Knights Landing was not a very busy place. He could go three days without a phone call.

While pastor of Knights Landing, Sid also covered the missions of St Anne in Zamora and drove to Winters on Sunday afternoons to celebrate the Spanish Mass.

Father Hall Attends Vatican II Renewal Program in Oakland

In 1978, as Sid ended his pastorate in Knights Landing, he attended the Vatican II Renewal Program in Oakland for about ten weeks. The bishop then appointed him assistant pastor of Saint Peter Parish in Sacramento. He found this parish to be a pleasant place and quite busy. The parish had a school and a large Hispanic population. Sidney served Saint Peter Parish from 1978 to 1980.

Coordinator of the Hispanic Apostolate

In 1980 Father Sid was appointed coordinator of the Hispanic apostolate for one year. He lived in residence at a house owned by the diocese on Capitol Avenue.

Return to Saint Peter Parish

In July 1981, Father Sid returned to Saint Peter Parish as associate pastor and also took care of the Spanish program at Saint Christopher Parish in Galt. He covered the Galt parish for the ailing Father Carl Willmann, the pastor of Galt, until he died. On September 13, 1982, Father Sid was appointed pastor of Galt and served in that capacity until January 1, 1986. He found Galt to be a busy parish and started a catechetical program. He hired a Social Service sister and a lay person to help organize the catechetical program. When Father Sidney began his Galt pastorate, the population was 6,000. During the four years of his pastorate, the Galt community continued to grow in great numbers.

During that time, Father Sid and Father Leo McAlister of Saint Joseph Parish in Elk Grove decided to rearrange the two parishes to reflect the reality of where the population was located. Wilton became part of the Elk Grove Parish at this time.



Photo provided by Father Hall

Father Hall Ministers to the Children

Back to Saint Peter Parish Once Again

Father Hall was a member of the Priests' Personnel Board at this time and the board was discussing what priests wanted to make a move. Sid was aware the Father Mossie O'Brien wanted to move to Galt so Sid decided to move back to Saint Peter Parish as a parochial vicar once again. He lived at Saint Peter Church from January 1, 1986 to August 13, 1989.

A Move to Saint Patrick Parish, Placerville

On August 14, 1989, Father Hall was assigned to Saint Patrick Parish in Placerville as a parochial vicar to work with Father Tony Gurnell, the pastor. Sid found that the Placerville parish was very large, including most of El Dorado County. He ministered to the Spanish speaking community in Placerville and had an attendance of 200 people at the Sunday Spanish Mass.

While Sid was in Placerville, he began therapy with a new doctor. The doctor felt Sid would do better if he went back to Saint Peter Parish. Sid was given various medicines and he found that Lithium enabled him to keep his emotional swings in check.

However, one day while Tony and Sid were driving home from a deanery meeting, Sid broke down and began to weep. His depression was debilitating him that day. Tony and Sid mutually agreed that it would be best for Sid to return to Saint Peter Parish. Bishop Quinn agreed to reassign Sid to Saint Peter Parish.

Father Hall Becomes Pastor of Saint Peter Parish

Father Sid served as parochial vicar at Saint Peter Parish for a while and then was appointed pastor of the parish in 1994 where he served in this role until June 30, 2002. During his pastorate, he started a weekly Mass in Vietnamese for the Vietnamese community. He celebrated this Mass because there were a good number of Vietnamese families who attended Saint Peter Parish.

During the same era Father Sid also began a Mass for Hmong Catholics at All Hallows Church. He reached out to this ethnic group as well. In 1994 Father Sid also served as a Catholic chaplain for the Sacramento Police Department and was chaplain at Shriners Hospital in Sacramento for several years. He often served as an interpreter for Spanish speaking families who brought their ill children from Mexico for medical help at Shriners Hospital.

Stepping Down as Pastor of Saint Peter Church

When Bishop Weigand began the fifty million dollar campaign in the diocese, Sid felt he was not up to the challenges of the campaign. He later changed his mind and stayed on as pastor until 2002.

Bishop Wiegand called Sidney and asked him to come to his office. Sid thought the bishop wanted to talk to him about his assistant but when he arrived at the chancery, he was directed to Bishop Garcia. Bishop Garcia told Father Sid that the Personnel Board thought his health was such that he should step down as pastor of Saint Peter Parish. Bishop Garcia asked Father Sid if he would be willing to go to Holy Cross Parish in West Sacramento to help Father Chad Puthoff, SDS. Father Sid agreed and moved to Holy Cross Parish. He enjoyed his work at the parish during the next three years.

The Stigmatine Fathers Come to Holy Cross Church

When the Salvatorians withdrew from Holy Cross Parish and the Stigmatine Fathers took over the parish, there was no room in the rectory for Sidney to remain so he moved to the Priests' Retirement Village in Citrus Heights for one year. His knee condition was getting more acute and Sid's father convinced him to seek medical help for his knee. He went to a doctor who operated and installed a new knee. After the surgery, the X-Ray on both knees looked good and Sidney went to Eskaton for therapy but the pain did not go away.

A Move to Mercy McMahan Terrace

Mary Francis Giamona, director of Mercy McMahan Terrace, contacted Father Sid and invited him to come to Mercy McMahan to live. He moved to a room on the third floor and has lived there for the past five years. Father Sid says living at Mercy McMahan Terrace has been a good place for him. He still experiences his emotional ups and downs but he is managing.

Reviewing his Life

Father Sidney has spent most of his life ministering to the Hispanic community and he has loved working with them. For thirty years he spent his annual vacation in Mexico. People were happy to have him come to visit. He had thought about spending his life in Mexico but he knew he had a commitment to keep in Sacramento. After his five years of ministry in Mexico City, he did not have the opportunity to return to Mexico, but he is happy he has spent his life as a priest.

Had he not been a priest, Sid says he might have jointed the US Navy and made a career of that or maybe he would have been a policeman helping people in that way.

Father Sidney Hall has been a priest now for 57 years and if his health had permitted, he would still be helping his people through presence, word and sacrament, celebrating with them all the important moments and events in their lives.

Father Sid has been a good and faithful priest and friend to thousands of people and the Churches of Sacramento and Mexico City are the richer because of his caring ministry. Thank you, Sidney, for your life of service to the People of God wherever you have gone to serve the Catholic community of faith.

Death of Father Hall

After enduring physical suffering long enough, God called home his servant Sidney Peter Hall to the Kingdom of Heaven early Tuesday morning, September 13, 2016.

A Funeral Mass for Father Hall was celebrated on Monday, September 18, at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento where Father Hall was ordained a priest. Bishop Jaime Soto was the principal celebrant and was joined by Bishops Myron Cotta, Francis Quinn, William Weigand, together with many priests and the people of God who knew and loved Father Hall.

The Homily given at Father Hall's Funeral Mass



Monsignor James T Murphy, retired vicar general of the diocese, was homilist at Father Hall's Funeral Mass. The text of his homily follows:

The last time I saw Sid Hall was Sunday afternoon of last week, a day and a half before he died. As usual his loving family members were there with him that afternoon. They had been taking care of him for several years, as his health deteriorated and he became more disabled:

John: who paid his bills when he didn't have the money to pay them himself.

Jerome: who visited him twice a week to make sure he did his leg exercises. If Jerome did not show up and get on his case, Sid would not do those exercises.

Rosemary: who was 22 years younger than Sid. When she was growing up she never really knew him because he had left the house, but in recent years she became very close to him. She used to call up every night and say: "Sid did you brush your teeth? OK! Good night." (Rosemary is a dental hygienist.)

Our prayers are with them today (also his brother David who is here from out of state) as they mourn the loss of a loved brother. I am sure they have no regrets. They were there for

Sid over many years, and were truly a loving family to him. They have many wonderful memories.

That was Sunday afternoon. A day and a half later, on Tuesday morning, I was up around 6 am. I was about to begin my prayers but noticed a text on my phone. It was from Susana Romo (who took the first reading today). This is what it said:

Fr Hall passed away at 3.51am. Ruben was with him.

Ruben, who is her husband, had noticed that his breathing was heavy that morning, and thought it might be near the end. So he began to say the Rosary in Spanish. He could tell that Fr Sid was following along although he could not actually say "Santa Maria, Madre de Dios....." As soon as Ruben finished the Rosary, Father Sid died. Ruben said he felt goose bumps witnessing the quiet and peaceful way it happened.

That morning, I made Susana's phone text the subject of my prayer. I thanked God that Sid had finally made it. After so many years of struggling with his health, - and selflessly serving the people despite that health - he had finally crossed the Great Divide and entered eternity.

And then I thought: It's been two hours since he died. I wonder what it is like for him now. What is he thinking? What is he feeling? What does he know now that he did not know two hours ago? Of course, we don't know the answer to those questions. Death is the great mystery of human existence. And by the way, being a priest does not necessarily make it any easier. Death is as much a mystery for us priests as it is for you. But when you are older, and closer to death yourself, you ask questions like that. Asking them is not a bad thing. It is healthy.

Then I opened the Liturgy of the Hours, and discovered that it was the Feast of St John Chrysostom, the great patriarch of Constantinople in the Fourth Century. Frequently on feasts like that the readings will include a text from the saint himself, something he has written or said. And sure enough, there was an excerpt from one of Chrysostom's sermons in the reading for that day. I found it to be remarkably relevant.

In this sermon Chrysostom was talking about the trials and tribulations he was suffering. (In his case it was not health but politics; he was exiled several times from his diocese.) He called those trials the inevitable storms of life but added that, with faith in Jesus, the boat can never sink. Nothing can scare you, not even death. Here is what he said:

"We brought nothing into this world, and we shall surely take nothing from it. I have only contempt for the world's threats. I find its blessings laughable.

I have no fear of poverty, no desire for wealth. I am not afraid of death, nor do I live, except for your good (meaning the good of the congregation he was addressing).

As I read this, the thought occurred to me that Fr Sid Hall could have written those words. He came into this world with nothing, and he left it with nothing. He gave away everything he ever had, and his only concern was serving the people, which is why during his years in Mercy McMahon there had been a constant stream of people coming to see him – hundreds of *compadres* and *comadres* who were touched by his ministry.

Jesus said: Anyone who leaves father or mother, brother or sister or children for my sake will receive hundreds of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, hundreds of compadres and comadres.

Sid was a good example of how celibacy is supposed to work for us priests. He gave up his own personal family, and received hundreds of families.

He is also a good example of a “Pope Francis priest.” He was a shepherd who knew his sheep, who knew the smell of his sheep.

Los sacerdotes que no hablan Español - que no trabajen con los Hispanos - no saben lo que están perdiendo. Cuando trabajas con los Hispanos, te adoptan, te conviertes en un miembro de la familia, te invitan a celebrar todos los bautismos, las bodas, los quince años, los funerales - como miembro de la familia.

Uno de los privilegios de ser un sacerdote viejo (como yo) es poder bautizar a los niños de los niños que bautizaste hace 30 años. Y he tenido esa experiencia pero el Padre Pedro ha tenido esa experiencia mucho más veces. El tuvo mucho más años sirviendo en el Apostolado Hispano.

Fr Sid Hall represents the end of an era. He is the last of those pioneers who learned Spanish when nobody was learning Spanish, and made a place of welcome for Hispanics in the Diocese of Sacramento. People like: Carl Willman, Tony Mayo, Keith Kenny, Joe Bishop, Gene Lucas, Dan Casey.

Fr Sid was one of those pioneers, the last of them. We stand on his shoulders.

Sr Kathleen Horgan told me she has memories of Sid that go back to the early sixties. In those days she was teaching sixth grade at St Joseph’s School over on Eight and G Streets (today it is a parking lot). That was one of the elementary schools for the Cathedral parish in those days. Fr Sid’s job was driving the school bus, and every morning he would drive around the Dos Rios neighborhood picking up kids. He became famous for pounding on the horn, trying to get those kids out of bed and to school on time. And he was known for his kindness and patience. They loved him.

Soon after that he asked for permission to go to Mexico for five years, which was granted. He worked in Yucatán and Mexico City, eventually becoming a pastor in the Capital. After his

five years were up he came back to Sacramento and spent the rest of his life working with Hispanics. He worked with others also, but his main focus was Hispanic ministry.

Hispanic Ministry has come a long way since those early days but we stand on the shoulders of men like Fr Sid Hall.

***ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO FATHER SIDNEY,
O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE
UPON HIM.***

***MAY HIS SOUL AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE
FAITHFUL DEPARTED THROUGH THE MERCY
OF GOD REST IN PEACE.***



Photo by John E Boll 2008

SACRAMENTO SUNSET