

Rev. Fernando Villalobos dies

The Rev. Fernando Villalobos, vicar for the Spanish speaking of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Stockton for five years, died Tuesday in his native Costa Rica. He was 38.

Villalobos left the Stockton diocese in September. He was on sabbatical leave, studying at the University of Guadalajara, and tentatively was scheduled to become pastor of the large St. Joseph's Catholic Church in downtown Los Angeles in April.

He was in Costa Rica for the holidays and suffered a fatal heart attack during emergency surgery on his spinal column, according to a Stockton diocese spokesman.

A funeral service will be held in San Jose, Costa Rica.

A local memorial service will be held, probably next week. The date and location have not been set. People wishing more information are asked to contact their parish churches.

In September 1980, Villalobos was appointed to carry out the many Hispanic-oriented programs of then-Bishop Roger Ma-



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hony of Stockton, who was named archbishop of Los Angeles four months ago.

Forty percent of the 140,000 Catholics in the six-county

Stockton diocese are of Hispanic descent.

Mahony, Villalobos and other diocese leaders were vocal on the Border Patrol's handling of Mexicans who come illegally to this country to work, but less conspicuous in aiding refugees from Central America. They also initiated more Spanish language Masses and other programs for Hispanics.

Villalobos himself once was an undocumented resident of the United States. After spending several years studying, teaching and working in Chile, he returned in 1976 with the necessary papers.

He was ordained as a priest in June 1979 by Mahony. He served as acting pastor and administrator of St. Mary's Church in Stockton three times between 1979 and 1981.

In addition to various administrative duties, Villalobos served as chaplain of the Stockton Police Department for three years and honorary chaplain of the burn unit at Dameron Hospital for five years.