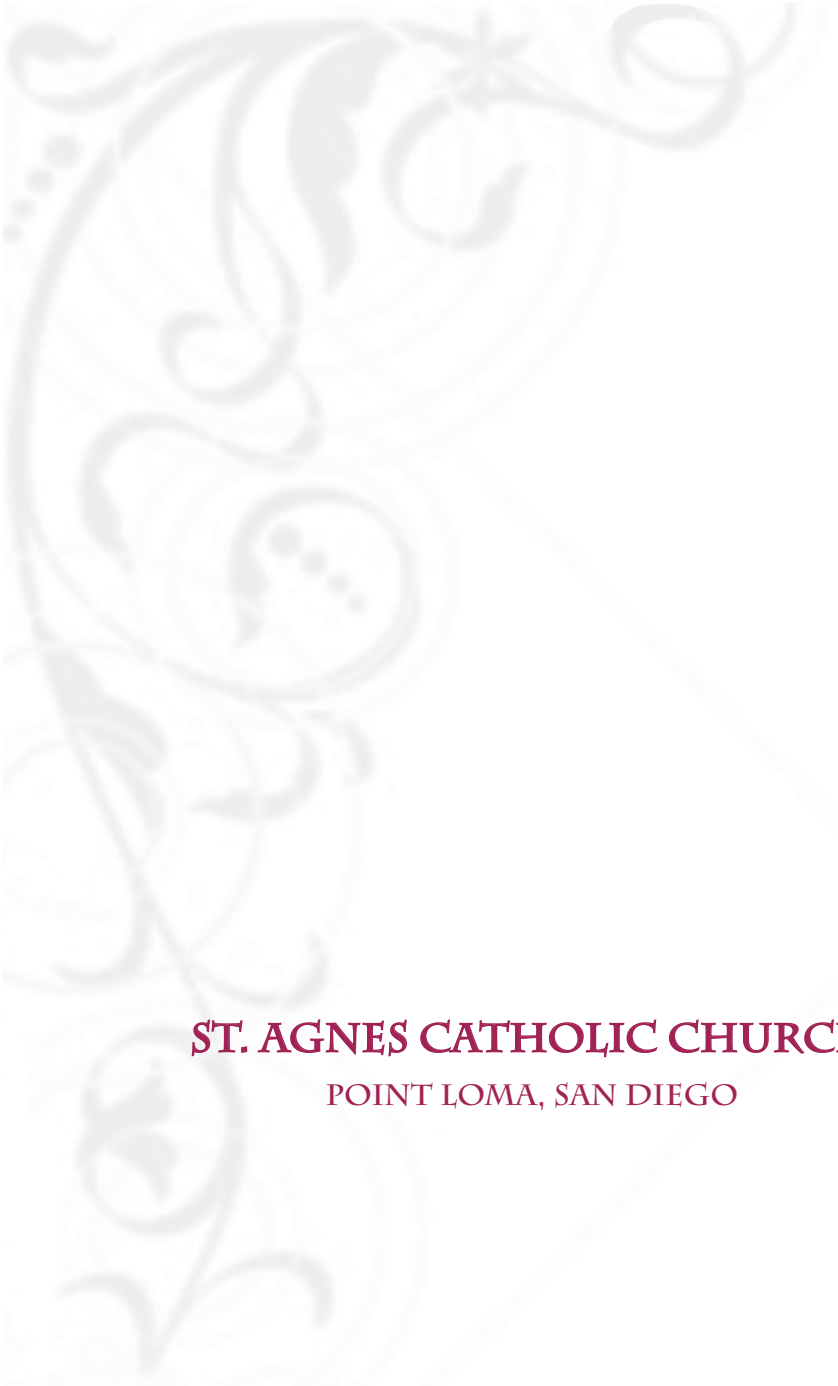


Chapter X

POWER OF THE SPIRIT



ST. AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH

POINT LOMA, SAN DIEGO

Lord Jesus,

Bless all our fishermen at sea. Bring them home safely.

Bless the entire industry, those who serve also to protect the ocean and living creatures, which you have created since the beginning of time.

Bless those families who suffer hardship due to the changes that have affected the tuna industry. And finally Lord, give eternal rest to those who have died and passed on to other shores. Bring peace and consolation to their families who still mourn their loss.

Our Lady of Good Voyage, guide each of us to keep our eyes always focused on your son, that we may follow Him and be guided on the course e wishes for us. Loving God, we offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ who is our Savior.

Amen!



ST. AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH

POINT LOMA, SAN DIEGO

THE FISHERMEN'S CHURCH

José Machado looked out over the channel to North Island to admire the scenery. It was the usual beautiful day in San Diego and José had just finished laying out the whaling camp for his employers, the Packard brothers. It was 1858 and José had been hired by Alpheus and Prince Packard to construct their proposed whaling operation at Ballast Point on Point Loma. José, now known as, Joseph Clark, was born in the Azores in 1830 (probably Pico), had come to California in 1852, and was one of the original Portuguese pioneers who begin the history of the California shore whaling at Monterey Bay in 1854. Little did Joseph (José) realize that he was now laying the foundations for the Portuguese community of San Diego.¹

The opportunities that awaited Portuguese immigrants in California filtered back to Manuel Francisco Madruga. Manuel was born in Pico, Azores, in 1849, and doubtlessly heard of the opportunities which awaited those brave enough to cross the ocean. In 1876 he arrived in San Diego and immediately joined the whaling company that had been active for many years. After a stint at whaling, Manuel turned to more traditional fishing and, with his small boat and line, provided enough money to begin raising a family. He built a small house in the La Playa area of Point Loma and his settlement became the focus of the subsequent Portuguese community of San Diego/Point Loma. The distinctive blue doors on their houses gave the area the name of 'the blue door shacks.'²

In fact, the first Portuguese to visit San Diego preceded Joseph Clark by over 300 years. João Rodrigues Cabrilho arrived in California in 1542 and first landed at San Diego Bay. Cabrilho was one of a long line of Portuguese mariners who made important discoveries during the Age of Discoveries.

The small but productive fishing industry quickly eclipsed the dying whaling business. Other groups also became involved in the fishing industry, with Chinese, Japanese, and Italians owning and crewing on fishing vessels. In 1900 the Joe Azevedo Fish cannery was already established providing to the wholesale market, and the Manuel Cabral Grocery catered to the retail end of the fishing business. 1909 saw the establishment of the first sardine cannery in the La Playa area. The sardines, packed in olive oil were caught at night in small boats with gill nets. This method, which was familiar to the Portuguese, who excelled at it, was very inefficient



The Madrugas, one of the pioneer Portuguese families of San Diego. Pictured is Manuel Francisco with his wife Rosalina and their sons. Photo courtesy of Portuguese Historical Center.

(Opposite)
St. Agnes Church, San Diego.
Photo by Joe Machado.

since each fish had to be individually removed from the net by hand. A few hundred pounds was considered a good catch. Sardines were also used to produce fish meal and fish oil.³

In 1908, the Portuguese began to fish for tuna. Prior to this time, tuna was never considered as a fish to be marketed commercially. By 1911, the first tuna canneries had opened. However, it was the First World War that greatly expanded demand for tuna as people began to appreciate its taste. The original “white meat tuna” was albacore, and fishing consisted of day trips out of San Diego returning at night. A catch of one ton was considered a good day’s work. Soon, striped tuna and blue fin tuna began to be captured. Then, in 1921, the yellow fin became more popular and sparked the need for larger boats venturing far south, as far as the Galapagos off of Ecuador. These boats continued to grow in size until vessels with capacities of 350 tons were cruising off the South American coast. By the 1960s, San Diego was considered the tuna capital of the world and processed more than 70% of all the canned tuna produced in the United States. In 1928, mackerel was added to the list of fish sought by the fishermen of San Diego.⁴



Example of pole fishing for tuna. Some tuna weighed as much as 200 pounds requiring three men to pull the fish aboard. Photo courtesy of Therese Garces.

As the fishing industry developed, the center of the Portuguese community moved two miles east of La Playa to the Roseville area. It was clear that the fishing industry was not only a business, but a lifestyle that included the

whole family. The women and children had to endure long periods of time without their husbands and fathers. Many times they worked in subsidiary businesses like canneries or ship building. Frequently, they helped their husbands and sons mend the nets in preparation for the next voyage. The beautiful and inspiring Tunamen’s Memorial attests to the danger of the life of a fisherman. The physical courage to be a fisherman and brave the open ocean took a special type of individual. This focus on lifestyle choice grew as the fishing industry expanded and became more time consuming and complicated.

By 1900, the large population of Portuguese that had settled in the La Playa area turned their attention to their need of a church. From the onset of the Portuguese arrival in San Diego, religion played a central point in their lives. On occasion Portuguese speaking visiting priests would come from Northern California to officiate at religious activities. Mass was held in an abandoned warehouse adjacent to the private home of José Leal Monteiro, near the corner of Cannon and Scott Streets in Roseville. Isabel Soares, at the age of nine, played the organ and sang. To attend mass in an established place of worship, the community needed to travel by a lengthy horse and buggy trip to Old Town or by sailing or rowing to



Tunamen’s Memorial. Photo courtesy of José Lomelino Alves.