

## Father Lawrence Scanlon

Lawrence Scanlon was born 28 September 1843 in Ballytarsna, County Tipperary, Ireland. He was the son of Patrick Scanlan and Catherine Ryan. He studied at St Patrick's College in Cashel, and then All Hallows College in Dublin, a famous missionary seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood on 28 June 1868. Legend remembers him as one of the greatest athletes who ever graduated in the college -- 198 pounds, six feet one inch tall, with black hair, vast shoulders, and large hands and feet.<sup>1</sup>

Scanlan departed for California, as many young Irish priests did in those days, in September 1868. He journeyed to New York, walked across the isthmus of Panama and sailed north to San Francisco. He was appointed as the assistant pastor of St. Patrick's Church in San Francisco on 29 November 1868. He served for two years there and then one year at St. Mary's Cathedral. Next, he was assigned to Pioche, Lincoln, Nevada. He arrived by stage at Hamilton in February 1869, where he contracted a severe cold which developed into mountain fever and pneumonia, and was down for a whole month. On 16 March 1869, he reached Pioche, and in less than three months, had built a frame church.<sup>2</sup>

He established the parish of Pioche and erected a frame church and lived in a shed at the rear. The third Sunday after the church opened, a deputation of miners protested his preaching death, judgment and hell. They urged he preach about heaven, but he replied: "While I'm here I'll preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He was boycotted, even by the Chinese cooks, who demanded cash with every meal. He soon won the hearts of the miners and was given \$50 to buy a new suit of clothes. The next week the church was full.<sup>3</sup>

He had to get physical with another young ruffian who kept thrusting his "obnoxious attentions" on him. The youth "took his punishment, and after the doctors finished patching him up proved on of the most ardent and enthusiastic supporters of the church. This man personally took a canvass of every mine in the district and handed the priest nearly a thousand dollars as the compulsory donations of pensioners whom he had never seen nor spoken to. This man also rounded up the women and children and organized a congregation that eventually became known as one of the most generous and fervent in the whole diocese".<sup>4</sup>

Scanlan appealed to the miners for a home to take care of poor men unable to care for themselves. A hospital and home for the aged, feeble and sick was built; miners paid \$1 a month for its support. After two years, Scanlan was recalled to Petaluma. The citizens petitioned the diocese to have him stay but failed.<sup>5</sup> After a few months, Scanlan volunteered to succeed Father Walsh in the Utah mission. He left for Salt Lake City, arriving 14 August 1873. He became the missionary rector over the largest parish in United States (85,000 square miles of territory), but there were only 800 Catholics in a state population of 87,000. There were three Catholic families, making about 20 members, in town.

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<sup>1</sup> Obituaries from Utah Newspapers, 1850-2005; Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan", in Utah Historical Quarterly, 1952, 20:135; The Catholic Church in Utah, by Harris and Scanlan, 1909, pp. 334, 327; *heritage.utah.gov*.

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan", in Utah Historical Quarterly, 1952, 20: 135; *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, 15 August 1909, p. 9.; *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 January 1897, p. 10; 11 May 1915; *Arizona Republican*, 10 February 1904; The Catholic Church in Utah, by Harris and Scanlan, 1909, p. 329; *Intermountain Catholic*, 25 November 1899, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, 15 August 1909, p. 9; *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 May 1915.

<sup>4</sup> *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 18 June 1919, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Reno Evening Gazette*, 5 September 1935; *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 January 1897, p. 10; 11 May 1915; *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, 15 August 1909, p. 9; The Catholic Church in Utah, by Harris and Scanlan, 1909, p. 330.

The one Catholic church in Salt Lake City, St Mary Magdalene, was encumbered with a heavy debt of \$6,000.<sup>6</sup>

Scanlan lived behind the old church. He was his own housekeeper, bought and cooked his own food, and had a clean table cover every day in the shape of the morning paper. He often walked 40-50 miles per day. Once while journeying on foot through the deserts of Nevada, he was surrounded by Apaches. After twenty minutes of jabbering, he was released due to an Indian he knew in the group. This Indian visited him often, and Scanlan would test the Indian's shooting skill by placing a nickel on a stick fifty yards away, and if he knocked it off with his arrow, he could keep it. He was so good that Scanlan said "he used to break me."<sup>7</sup>

The church debt was completely wiped out in less than two years. He then secured ground to build a school. Sisters arrived in May 1875 and travelled around the mining camps to receive contributions. St Mary's Academy was finished in September 1875. The Hospital of the Holy Cross opened in October 1875 in a rented building on Fifth East. Ten acres were purchased in 1881 to become the new hospital. He and an assistant priest rode a regular six-week circuit to the mining camps at Park City, Bingham Canyon, Mercur, Stockton and Ophir at least once a month.<sup>8</sup>

In 1877, one of his thousand-mile trips on horseback took him to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, where he stayed for five months. On his return, he sent Father Kiely to Silver Reef, who held services in an upstairs room of the hotel. Scanlan made a second visit in November 1878.<sup>9</sup> In January 1879, he secured a large lot and began a subscription list for a new church in Silver Reef. The appeal had a generous response and work was soon begun. In less than four months a neat, commodious, frame church was completed at the cost of \$2,372.14. The first service was celebrated on Easter Sunday in 1879. The church was blessed on the same day and dedicated to St John. The church had no tower when it was finished. Father Hyde collected money and eventually a tower was built and a 400-pound bell installed.<sup>10</sup>

The miners and citizens held a meeting in February 1879 with Judge Barbee as chair. A committee of three invited Father Scanlan to the meeting. They asked Scanlan to establish and conduct a hospital. Scanlan indicated that he would ask some sisters to do so, provided the citizens and employees of the mills and mines pay \$1.00 per month. With this funding, the sick, disabled, indigent and needy would be nursed and cared for. Captain Henry S. Lubbock, Col Enos A. Wall, John H. Rice, and Judge Barbee signed papers to that effect. It was to be staffed by a surgeon and three sisters of the Holy Cross.<sup>11</sup>

Construction on the hospital began 1 April 1879. A rock basement was soon completed, and it was ready for occupancy on 1 June. Five sisters of the Holy Cross reached Silver Reef on 31 July and opened the hospital on 1 August after a total cost of \$2,149.07. It was a two-story structure with living quarters on the ground floor for the sisters: Sister Mary Constance Hayes, Sister Mary Regis Kelly,

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<sup>6</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 January 1897, p. 10; *Intermountain Catholic*, 12 October 1899, p. 1; Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan, 1843–1915," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 20 (1952): 135–58.

<sup>7</sup> *Intermountain Catholic*, 14 August 1909, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan, 1843–1915," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 20 (1952): 135–58; *Arizona Republican*, 10 February 1904; *Intermountain Catholic*, 12 October 1899, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1; 11 November 1899, p. 8; *The Catholic Church in Utah*, by Harris and Scanlan, 1909, p. 331.

<sup>10</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 May 1915; *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1; [heritage.utah.gov](http://heritage.utah.gov)

<sup>11</sup> *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1; *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 May 1915.

Sister Mary Eleutherius Monclair, Sister Mary Bernard O'Neill, Sister Mary Euphrosine Pepin, and Sister Mary Febronia Ward. St. John's church and hospital were closed in 1883. Sometime after 1888, the church building was purchased and moved by Pappy Stirling to the land next to his home in Leeds, Utah, where it was used for dances and other social gatherings. The lumber from the hospital was sold to Robert C. Lund for his new home in St. George, Utah.<sup>12</sup>

One day, late in 1878, John M. Macfarlane asked Father Scanlan why he didn't perform a High Mass in Silver Reef. He explained that they had no large building and no choir. Macfarlane discussed the matter with stake president Erastus Snow and an invitation was extended to use the newly finished St George Tabernacle and its choir. Catholic music was given to the choir master and in two weeks the choir knew the Latin mass. On 25 May 1879, Father Scanlan held High Mass, mostly attended by local Mormons and a few miners from Silver Reef. Before the service began, the father explained the mass and the significance of the vestments. He preached a sermon "True adorers of God shall adore him in spirit and truth". Careful to give no offence and respect the belief of his hearers, he won the esteem and good will of all. Nine months later he returned to Salt Lake, met by his parishioners and was given a gold watch.<sup>13</sup>

Now that the spiritual and corporeal needs of the Catholic adults were provided for, they turned to the children. Scanlan wanted a school but would not ask his people for the means to erect a school, as all had generously given for the church and hospital. He decided that the church building was an obvious opportunity during the week, and asked the sisters to conduct it. St. Mary's School was opened on 1 September 1879 and was largely attended for six years. Mormon children also attended this school and took the music lessons offered. In 1885, many families had left and there was very little work for miners. The sisters were withdrawn and the mission closed.<sup>14</sup>

Father Scanlan returned to Salt Lake City, where he was the pastor of the Church of St Mary Magdalene.<sup>15</sup> He laid the cornerstones of the foundation of the Holy Cross Hospital in August 1881. The School of the Holy Cross opened in the basement of the new hospital in 1882.<sup>16</sup> In 1885, he laid the cornerstone for a new Catholic college, to be modeled on Notre Dame, with 100 pupils and a dormitory heated by steam. All Hallows College, for the education of boys and young men (both boarders and day pupils), opened under the immediate supervision of the Very Reverend Father Scanlan in September 1886.<sup>17</sup>

Scanlan continued to work closely with the Mormon church leaders, refusing to sign a document calling for special legislation against the Mormons which had been sent to President Cleveland.<sup>18</sup> On 15 September 1886, a cablegram from Rome announced the appointment of Very Reverend Lawrence Scanlan of Salt Lake City as a titular bishop and vicar apostolic of Utah Territory by Pope Leo XIII. When he was told the news by a reporter, he said it must be a mistake, but it was soon confirmed by a letter from his superior and the official notice "bulls" was sent the following April. He

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<sup>12</sup> *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1; [heritage.utah.gov](http://heritage.utah.gov)

<sup>13</sup> Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan, 1843–1915," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 20 (1952): 135–58; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 February 1965; *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, 15 August 1909, p. 9; *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Intermountain Catholic*, 4 November 1899, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 July 1880, p. 3

<sup>16</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 August 1881, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 15 May 1885, p. 4; 24 August 1885, p. 1; *Intermountain Catholic*, 19 October 1899, p. 1; *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 23 September 1886, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 January 1897, p. 10.

was consecrated in St Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco on 29 June 1887. His title was Bishop of Laraden, an old diocese in Asia, once having a Catholic population but the See was now vacant.<sup>19</sup>

His area embraced nearly 155,000 square miles, including all of Utah Territory and the counties of Elko, Lander, Eureka, White Pine, Nye and Lincoln, in Nevada.<sup>20</sup> In 1887, his parish was created a diocese and he became the first Bishop of Salt Lake City, a position he held for 31 years.<sup>21</sup> He built himself a new residence at 309 East First South Street.<sup>22</sup> In 1890, he purchased land and broke ground for a new cathedral in 1899. St Mary Magdalene's Cathedral was constructed on the corner of South Temple and B streets, completed in 1909 at a cost of \$450,000.<sup>23</sup>

Scanlan suffered from nervousness and insomnia and his doctor suggested he seek a lower altitude. He tried southern California but suffered from severe colds. He spent two winters at Castle Creek Hot Springs in the Salt River Valley in Arizona (near Phoenix).<sup>24</sup> He died of chronic nephritis in the Holy Cross Hospital on 10 May 1915 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah. He was buried in a vault at St Mary's Cathedral in Salt Lake City.<sup>25</sup> The episcopal ring which he wore throughout his service as bishop was an heirloom, worn 200 years earlier by the Archbishop of Cashel, Tipperary, Ireland. Archbishop Croke of Tipperary had given Scanlan the ring when he left for America in 1868. Croke urged him to attend to his duties so that someday he might wear the ring as a bishop.<sup>26</sup>

A handwritten signature in cursive script. The top line reads "10th day of January A.D. 1888" and the main body of the signature reads "Lawrence Scanlan".

Signature of Lawrence Scanlan from his will dated 1888 (image from *Ancestry.com*)

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<sup>19</sup> *The News* [Frederick, Maryland], 15 September 1886

<sup>20</sup> *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 27 May 1887, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Arizona Republican*, 10 February 1904; *Reno Evening Gazette*, 5 September 1935; *Arizona Republican*, 10 February 1904; *Salt Lake Herald*, 26 December 1890, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Utah Directory*, 1890; *Salt Lake Herald*, 28 May 1890, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Robert J. Dwyer, "Pioneer Bishop: Lawrence Scanlan, 1843–1915," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 20 (1952): 135–58.

<sup>24</sup> *Arizona Republican*, 10 February 1904.

<sup>25</sup> *Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964*; *Utah Deaths and Burials, 1888-1946*; *Utah Salt Lake County Death Records, 1849-1949*; *Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966*.

<sup>26</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 May 1915.



(Image from *Deseret Evening News*, 6 October 1900, p. 13)



(Image from *Findagrave.com*)



Father Scanlan and Father John Bertolucci, left, both at the forefront of the Catholic charismatic renewal, preach about the cost of commitment at FIRE rallies around the country.

(Image from *New Wine*, February 1985)



Plaque honoring Father Scanlan in the Cathedral of the Madeleine (image from [pauhtun.org](http://pauhtun.org))