Official Archbishop Correspondence Files, 1844-1884

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2020
Descriptive Summary

Title: Official Archbishop Correspondence Files, 1844-1884
Dates: 1850/1884
Collection Number: Consult repository
Creator/Collector: Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany, O.P. (1814-1888)
Extent: 1.5 linear ft.
Repository: Archives of the Archdiocese of San Francisco
Menlo Park, California 94025

Abstract: The Official Archbishop Correspondence Files contain correspondence received by archbishops of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and in some cases, their copy-replies. The Archbishop Alemany correspondence files span the period of his episcopacy as the first archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco from 1853-1884.

Language of Material: English

Access
Collection open for research.

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Preferred Citation
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Biography/Administrative History
Roman Catholic Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany, O.P. (Dominican Order of Preachers) came to California in 1850 to assume his duties as Bishop of Monterey, California. In 1853, he was transferred to the newly created metropolitan see of San Francisco to become its first Archbishop. At the time, the Archdiocese of San Francisco encompassed all of the state of California north of Monterey Bay as well as parts of territories in Oregon, Nevada and Utah. During Archbishop Alemany's episcopacy, he presided over the significant work to address the exponential growth of the Catholic Church and its faithful in California during the Gold Rush era. To serve the influx of immigrant Catholics arriving at the time, parish churches were erected in San Francisco for Mexican, French, German, and Italian communities. Archbishop Alemany also actively recruited Catholic men and women religious communities to establish missions and serve his new archdiocese by fulfilling the educational, medical, and social welfare needs created by the population boom. To serve the growing mining population in the Sierra Nevada during this time, Alemany split the San Francisco archdiocese to establish the Diocese of Grass Valley which eventually became part of the Diocese of Sacramento. As the archdiocese continued to grow, Alemany ramped up efforts to recruit and train native and local clergy, as many of his clergy still came from overseas. He established Saint Thomas Seminary at Mission San Jose in 1853, but the seminary struggled and closed in 1865. In 1872, Archbishop Alemany approved the establishment of the first and only women religious community to be founded in San Francisco, the Sisters of the Holy Family. Archbishop Alemany served as archbishop until resigning in 1884, and then retiring to his native home of Vic, Spain where he spent his remaining years until passing away in 1888.

Scope and Content of Collection
The official correspondence files for Archbishop Alemany is mostly business in nature, and primarily document property and legal matters, permissions granted by the archbishop, and his financial dealings in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco. The Archdiocese of San Francisco was erected in 1853, which at the time expanded the geographic region of Northern California, and parts of the Oregon, Nevada, and Utah territories. Archbishop Alemany maintained correspondence between individuals, institutions, and religious communities during a period of growth and expansion of the Catholic Church in California. Most of the letters are original and with photostats or photocopies of letters that were previously obtained from other archives sources. The files also contain newspaper clippings.

Archbishop Alemany Correspondence Inventory