



The tragedy of St. Peter's Church, its destruction at what should have been the beginning of its useful life, can only make me "grieve," to use Father John Olivier's word.

Sunday after mass I watched as a section of roof fell in. I thought back to my first contact with this edifice. It was before the church existed. In fact it was before the architect's design had been considered for Pacifica, and it was before I knew there was such a town as Pacifica. (Yes, children, there was such a time.)

The architect's drawing appeared in the Monitor (the Archdiocesan newspaper) as the projected new chapel of the University of California Newman Club.

PLANS CHANGED. The circular design for Berkeley was dropped. A fortress-like structure—less vulnerable to radical rock throwers—was chosen.

And the architect was invited to Pacifica, his design was constructed on "Rielly's Ranch" (Francis Rielly was pastor at the time), the 40-acre parcel at the end of Linda Mar Boulevard, and the first services were held

around the end of 1963. The church had its shortcomings. It took about 15 years to find out its major shortcoming.

But there were a few others easier to spot. Glass windows break, and crack, and people standing had to resist the temptation to lean. There was a vast shortage of electrical plugs in the place. Motorcyclists were visible through the clear glass, very distracting to worshippers, or at least to this one.

ARCHITECTS like to call buildings like St. Peter's statements. The building was supposed to do more than protect worshippers from wind, rain and cold weather.

It was supposed to cause those who saw it to raise their minds to higher things. Depending on the bent of your mind, you might think of the crown of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, or hands in supplication.

I will miss the sight of St. Peter's. In a sea of tract homes it was something different. Whether it was the religious statement it was supposed to be I can't say. It never caused my soul to be ennobled, though I enjoyed it as architecture.

IT WAS unique, in a way that no other church in Pacifica is, or probably will be again.

I have seen other churches destroyed, but usually older churches which—so to speak—had lived their lives.

I saw the burned St. Mary's Cathedral. It was replaced by the "Bishop's Bendix," as Herb Caen calls it.

Whether St. Anthony's in the Mission district, or the church in Hunter's Point area that was set on fire during a Samoan festival, or even the church in Gilroy that I saw burn over 40 years ago, I mourn the loss of any church. But St. Peter's loss is saddest of all.

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