



Bishop Norbert M. Dorsey

December 14, 1929 - February 21, 2013

Bishop Norbert M. Dorsey died on Thursday, February 21, 2013 in Orlando, Florida after a long battle with cancer. He was born Leonard James Dorsey on December 14, 1929 in Springfield, Massachusetts. He is predeceased by his father, Leonard E. and mother, Mary Ann, nee Dowd, and brother, Paul J. He is survived by his sister-in-law, Shirley L. Dorsey, of East Longmeadow, MA, and niece, Gemma L. Dorsey, of Boston, and Brother Augustine Lowe, C.P., his devoted brother in Christ.

Leonard attended Holy Cross Seminary in Dunkirk, New York, from 1946-1948 and pronounced his vows as a Passionist with the religious name of Norbert on August 15, 1949. He studied philosophy and theology in Jamaica, New York and Union City, New Jersey, obtaining a Masters Degree in Theology before being ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Cuthbert O’Gara, CP, on April 28, 1956, at St. Michael’s Monastery in Union City. After his ordination, he studied Sacred Eloquence for a year in West Springfield before going on to study in Munich, London, and Rome. He held the degrees of Maestro from the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, and Doctor of Sacred Theology from the Gregorian University. He was a composer of music.

Upon returning to the United States, Fr. Dorsey was assigned to the Passionist monastery in West Hartford, CT, as a theology professor and the Director of Formation. Five years later, in 1965, he was elected Rector of the Monastery and Theologate in West Springfield, MA. During his term there, he organized courses in the Theology of Vatican Council II for the laity. In 1968,

he was elected to the first of two terms as Provincial Consultor for the Eastern Province of the Passionists. During this time he was Director of Personnel for over 600 religious men, and also the Dean of Studies and Formation.

Throughout those years, Father Dorsey was a popular preacher of parish missions and retreats for the laity, religious, and clergy throughout the United States and Canada. In 1976, while serving as an American delegate to the international General Chapter of the Passionists, Fr. Dorsey was elected Assistant General of the Passionists worldwide, and re-elected in 1982. Based in Rome, he shared the life and experience of the Church in five continents during his periodic "Visitations" to most of the 52 countries where the Passionists are established.

On January 10, 1986, Pope John Paul II nominated Fr. Dorsey Titular Bishop of Mactaris and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Miami. He was consecrated by Archbishop Edward J. McCarthy at St. Mary's Cathedral in Miami on March 19, 1986. In Miami, Bishop Dorsey served as Vicar General and Executive Director of the Ministry of Persons. He also served on the boards of St. Thomas University and Barry University in Miami, and St. Leo College near Tampa.

Bishop Dorsey was installed as the third bishop of Orlando on May 25, 1990. During his episcopacy, the Diocese grew from 216,000 to almost 400,000 Catholics. Bishop Dorsey established the parishes of Holy Cross, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Rose of Lima, and St. John the Evangelist, and the mission of St. Leo the Great in Lake Wales. He oversaw numerous construction, expansion, and renovation projects, including the building of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe Shrine in 1993, elementary schools for Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Kissimmee; Resurrection Catholic Church and St. Anthony Catholic Church, Lakeland; Annunciation Catholic Church, Altamonte Springs; Holy Family Catholic Church, Orlando and Trinity Catholic High School in Ocala; and new churches at Queen of Peace, Ocala; Prince of Peace, Ormond Beach; Resurrection, Winter Garden; St. Ann, DeBary; St. Mary, Rockledge; and Annunciation,

Altamonte Springs. He established a cemetery at San Pedro Retreat Center for priests of the diocese. In 1996 Bishop Dorsey gathered eleven thousand people together for the first Diocesan-wide celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. On this memorable day, Catholics came together from near and far to show their unity and passion for their faith. Bishop Dorsey was the first bishop to establish the Blue Mass, a celebration of the gifts of public safety personnel, in the Diocese of Orlando. The first Blue Mass was celebrated on October 5, 2001 at St. James Cathedral. In 2004 he established Bishop Grady Villas, a 10-acre residential community in St. Cloud for adults with disabilities. Bishop Dorsey spoke several languages, including Spanish, Italian, French, and Creole.

In 1995, Bishop Dorsey established a Diocesan Review Board for the safety of vulnerable populations and in 1997, he established a diocese-wide program of employee and volunteer fingerprinting and criminal background checks and safe environment training.

Under Bishop Dorsey's direction, the diocese purchased, in 2001, most of the historic post office building in downtown Orlando, to be a new Chancery center for the growing diocesan offices. The 2001 purchase placed the diocesan offices right next door to the Cathedral of St. James.

Pope John Paul II accepted Bishop Dorsey's letter of retirement on November 13, 2004.

His motto was "Love is Ingenious," taken from the Rule of the Passionist Congregation, written by St. Paul of the Cross. The full text reads: "The love of God is very ingenious and is proved not so much by words, as by the deeds and actions of the lovers."

For all of his accomplishments listed above, Bishop Dorsey was a gentle but ardent servant of the Gospel. His herald of Christ to the 'holy and beautiful people of God' echoes in the hearts of many who knew him. We are grateful to God who made Bishop Dorsey an Apostle and gave him to us as our shepherd and precious friend.

Visitation will be from 1:00pm - 9:00 pm on Wednesday with a Vigil at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 27 at St. James Cathedral. The Funeral Mass will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 28 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe.

Arrangements are entrusted to DeGusipe Funeral Home & Crematory, 9001 N. Orlando Avenue, Maitland, Florida 32751. (407) 695-CARE(2273).