



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Diocese Announces the Passing of Bishop Emeritus Joseph Adamec

(HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA) – The Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, died unexpectedly on March 20, 2019. He was 83 years old.

Bishop Joseph was born in Bannister, Michigan, on August 13, 1935, the son of the late Michael and Alzbeta (Ochran) Adamec, both immigrants from Slovakia.

He attended Michigan State University and studied for the priesthood at the Pontifical Nepomucene College in Rome. He was ordained a priest on July 3, 1960. The following year, he completed studies and was awarded a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Lateran University.

Bishop Joseph was ordained for the Diocese of Nitra, Slovakia – the native diocese of his parents. The severe political situation in Czechoslovakia – of which Slovakia was then a part – prevented him from fulfilling his desire to serve the Church in the land of his family. Instead, he returned to the United States and began his ministry in his home diocese of Saginaw, Michigan.

After serving in several parishes in the 1960s, Bishop Joseph was appointed to various diocesan positions including Chancellor, Secretary to the Bishop, and Master of Ceremonies. In 1977, he was appointed Pastor of Saint Hyacinth Parish in Bay City, Michigan, and in 1984, he became Pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Saginaw. The following year, he was named Prelate of Honor with the title of Monsignor.

Bishop Joseph was ordained a Bishop on May 20, 1987, at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona and installed as the seventh Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown. Among his early priorities were Liturgical renewal, lay ministry formation, and continued development of the Permanent Diaconate.

Aware of the declining population, changes to the social landscape, aging church properties, and decreasing vocations to the priesthood, Bishop Joseph created a committee to study parish reconfiguration and establish a comprehensive plan to prepare for the resulting pastoral challenges. The full plan called for the gradual clustering, merging, and closing of parishes to better position the diocese moving into the next century. It was presented to the clergy in 1994 and was given unanimous support. Implementation of the plan began in 1995.

Throughout his years as Bishop, Bishop Joseph celebrated and promoted the spiritual legacy of Father Demetrius Gallitzin in the life of the Church of Altoona-Johnstown. Father Gallitzin was a Russian prince who gave up his noble title in the late 1700s to be a priest in America and ultimately minister to the faithful here in the Allegheny Mountains. In 1990, Bishop Joseph instituted the Prince Gallitzin Cross Award, which annually recognized clergy, religious, and laity who exhibit the “evangelizing spirit” of Father Gallitzin. In 2001, he began investigating the launch of a formal Cause for Canonization for Father Gallitzin, an effort which advanced to Rome in 2013 and continues to the present day.

Bishop Joseph retired as Bishop of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown on January 14, 2011, and was appointed Administrator of the diocese until the ordination and installation of his successor, Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, on April 19, 2011. Bishop Joseph was the longest-serving Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown. Since his retirement, he resided in Hollidaysburg.

Besides his parents, Bishop Joseph was preceded in death by a brother, Edward Adamec of Florida. He is survived by nephew Michael Adamec, and wife, Linda, of Florida, niece Cathy Barone of Tennessee, special relative in Slovakia, Anna Skratek, and beloved friend Elaine Cicotello of Hollidaysburg.

Funeral arrangements are pending.