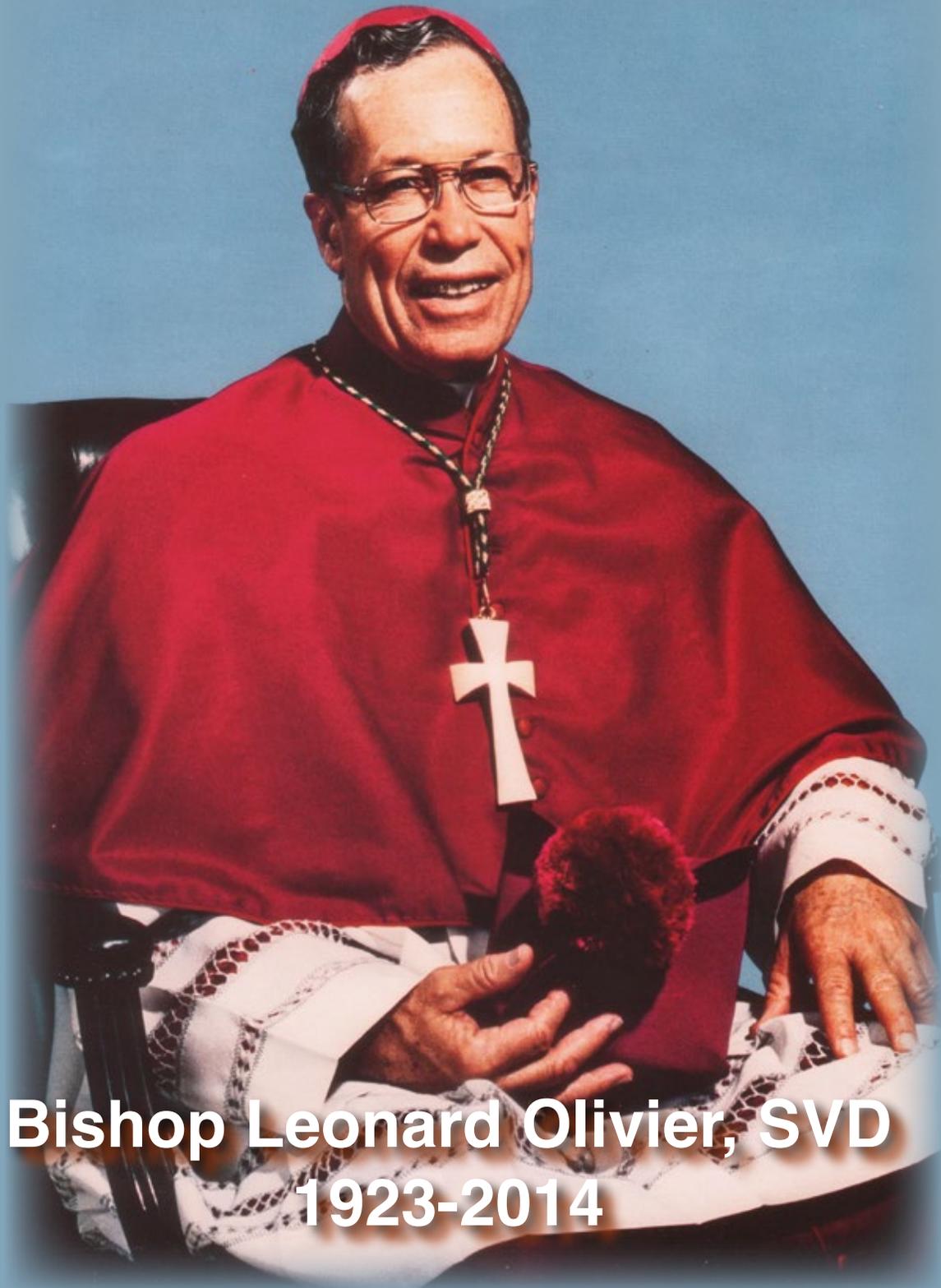


in a
WordTM

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**Bishop Leonard Olivier, SVD
1923-2014**



Bishop Leonard Olivier, SVD passed away on November 19, 2014 at the age of 91.

He was a good friend and mentor to many. He loved his family and the Society of the Divine Word. His memory of the students he taught at the Seminary in Bay Saint Louis many years ago was amazing.

Here was a good, spiritual man who we are sure God has prepared a very special place.



Bishop Olivier celebrating Mass at 60th Anniversary in Lake Charles, Louisiana



Bishop Olivier's Coat of Arms



Cardinal Hickey consecrating Bishop Olivier 1988



1982 photo of Olivier when pastor at St. Anthony Parish in Lafayette, Louisiana



Borgia Aubespain at Bishop Olivier's Consecration



Photos by Peter Son and Brother Dan Holman and Fr. Pawlicki



Archbishop Marino at Bishop Olivier's Consecration



Bishop Olivier's friends at Consecration

LEONARD OLIVIER, A BISHOP OF FAMILY FOLKLORE

by Father Jerome Ledoux, SVD

From my earliest memories, Jim Olivier was a household name in church circles, especially around times like the annual church bazaar at Sacred Heart Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Doing the carpentry work for setting up chance, fun and food stands, plus making himself a handyman available for the many little tasks that made for a grand social weekend of amusement and profit, Jim was the go-to person for getting things done.

With that spark and work ethic, James L. and Mathilda Rochon Olivier became one and imparted their faith, ethos and love to five daughters and three sons. Leonard, the fifth child, observed, "My desire to become a priest was fostered by the example of my very Catholic family. My family raised us in a very Catholic atmosphere. They sent me to Catholic school. We went to Mass every week. It never occurred to us to miss Mass."

Reflecting back at the time of his Golden Priestly Anniversary in 2001, he stated, "I would say that from the time I was 7 or 8 years old I knew that I wanted to become a priest. I was inspired by the devotion of my father and mother, the service to the people of the Holy Ghost Fathers who staffed my home parish, and the positive encouragement of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters who taught me in elementary school."

No doubt, Leonard's early vocation to the priesthood was given a push by homeboy Harold Robert Perry who entered "The Bay" – St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi – seven years ahead of him. They were the point men of the dozen-plus local boys who would try their hand at testing their perceived vocation to the priesthood.

After 14 years in the pipeline of high school at St. Augustine Seminary, two years of novitiate at Techny, Illinois, college and four years of theology at St. Augustine Major Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Leonard was ready for ordination to the priesthood. What were the improbable odds that he and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) would be ordained on the same day, June 29, 1951? The ancients would have seen an omen in that.

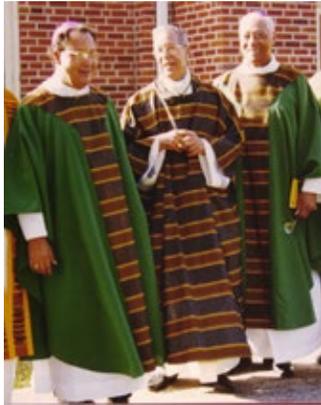
Family folklorist that he was, the very young Father Olivier was appointed father of a family: Assistant Prefect of seminarians at St. Augustine Seminary, serving first in that role, then as Prefect from 1952 to 1973. He knew not only the names, but the individual personalities of the seminarians, forming with them a bond unbroken even to this day.

Moving to the next level of education, he was assigned the work of Secretary for Studies for all Divine Word

Seminaries in the United States from 1974 to 1982 and was simultaneously Rector of the Divine Word Seminary in Epworth, Iowa.

Returning to the South, Father Olivier was appointed pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Lafayette, Louisiana where he was named Vicar for Black Catholics in the diocese. In pure shock, he received a November, 1988 call from the Papal Nuncio, saying that Pope John Paul II had named him Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. Thus, he would become the thirteenth black bishop of the 20th century.

A big vanload of us SVDs in Bay St. Louis, where I was on sabbatical, rolled to Washington, D.C. for Father Olivier's ordination as a bishop. Held in joyous expectation, there was a solemn vigil of prayer and remarks from a couple of priests on December 19. A standing-room-only crowd greeted an overwhelmed Leonard Olivier on December 20 as an endless queue of people filed into the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle.



Bishop Olivier with Bishops Guillory and Carmon

Hitting the ground running, Bishop Olivier served as the regional bishop for the District of Columbia. Commenting on his ministry as bishop, he disclosed that he labored over sermons and statements and would not speak off the cuff, "because it would be an injustice to the people." That was a typical indicator of his personality and preparedness.

After confirmations, he congenially lingered with the people for photos and chatter. At Christmas time he visited the D.C. jail, celebrating a Mass for the women and a Mass for the men, after which presents were distributed. Again, there was Leonard the family man. His upbringing in a tight-knit, loving family formed the substance and style of his ministry.

True to his role as family folklorist, Leonard often reminisced fondly about his siblings. One of his favorite stories concerned his siblings' penchant for playing pranks. An impish sister decided to scare the dickens out of the others. When it became dark enough, she donned a white sheet and moved menacingly along the side of the house. Just as she moved into sight of the others, the thorns of a rosebush snared the sheet. In sheer terror, she screamed and ran to the door while her siblings laughed till they cried.

Fittingly, Leonard went home to God on the eve of his episcopal ordination. "There will be a mighty celebration up there!" said his brother Edward. "Our dear parents, my dear wife and my dear siblings all celebrating together! What a time we will have with God!"

in a word or two

Missionary persevered through persecution and peril to become a priest



Father Joseph Minh Công Nguyễn SVD, ordained in 2011, died peacefully at 3:40 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 14 at the Divine Word Residence, following complications from strokes. Two of his younger brothers from Vietnam had been with him during his final moments and witnessed his last breath.

“Joseph faced many hardships during his time on earth, but he remained cheerful and positive,” said Father Quang Duc Dinh SVD, rector of the Divine Word Residence at Techny. “He could have become embittered, but instead he grew in optimism. His life was deeply rooted in the Word of God.”

Although Father Joseph Minh, 56, was a youth when he recognized his call to the priesthood, he wasn't ordained to the priesthood until age 53.

Born in Thủ Đức, Vietnam, Father Joseph Minh was the fourth child of Joseph Nguyen Van Dong and Anna Luong Thi Mau's ten children. As a teenager in the early 1970s, he attended a Salesian seminary. However, when the Communists took control of his home country, the government confiscated the seminary. They imprisoned the seminarians in 1978. Nine years later, officials put him in jail a second time because of his Catholic faith.

Despite the setbacks, Father Joseph Minh professed perpetual vows with the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1984. Because of his refusal to join the army, the Vietnamese government thwarted his ordination to the priesthood. He then decided that the only way to become a priest was to escape the situation. He continued to work with the pastor of a small parish in Vietnam until an anonymous parishioner gave \$1,000 for his escape.

In 1990, he embarked upon a boat in the cover of night. He and fellow passengers drifted at sea for two weeks, encountering turbulent storms and Malaysian pirates. They landed in Indonesia, where he lived in the Galang Refugee Camp for four years.

Father Joseph Minh immigrated to California in 1994 and eventually learned English and earned a bachelor's degree in electronics. Before joining the Divine Word Missionaries, he worked in a test lab for a digital camera

company in San Jose, Calif., and served the Church through music ministry. An accomplished musician, he played guitar, clarinet, flute, violin, saxophone, pipe organ, piano and drums. He was actively involved with Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Association in Vietnam and the United States.

In 2002, he happened to hear a homily by Father Quang Duc Dinh about priesthood and religious life. It changed his life. Shortly thereafter, Father Joseph Minh joined the Divine Word Missionaries through its Associates Program. In 2004, he professed religious vows with the Society of the Divine Word.

As a Divine Word seminarian, he tutored students at St. Felicitas and ministered to the Vietnamese choir at St. Henry, both in Chicago. As a deacon, he served at Queenship of Mary in Glen Ellyn, Ill.

After ordination to the priesthood in 2011, Father Joseph Minh was sent south for his first assignment. He was associate pastor at St. Joseph in Livingston, Texas, for two years. For six weeks during the summer for 2013, he temporarily filled in for the pastor of Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Opelousas, La. In July 2013, Father Joseph Minh was assigned to Sacred Heart in Greenville, Miss., and St. Francis of Assisi in Shaw, Miss., where he suffered a stroke while presiding at Sunday Mass.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his older brother and his older sister. He is survived by his three sisters and four brothers, all of whom live in Vietnam.

His funeral took place on Saturday, Nov. 22, at 10:30 a.m. at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit Chapel, followed by burial at St. Mary Cemetery, Techny, Illinois.



Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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