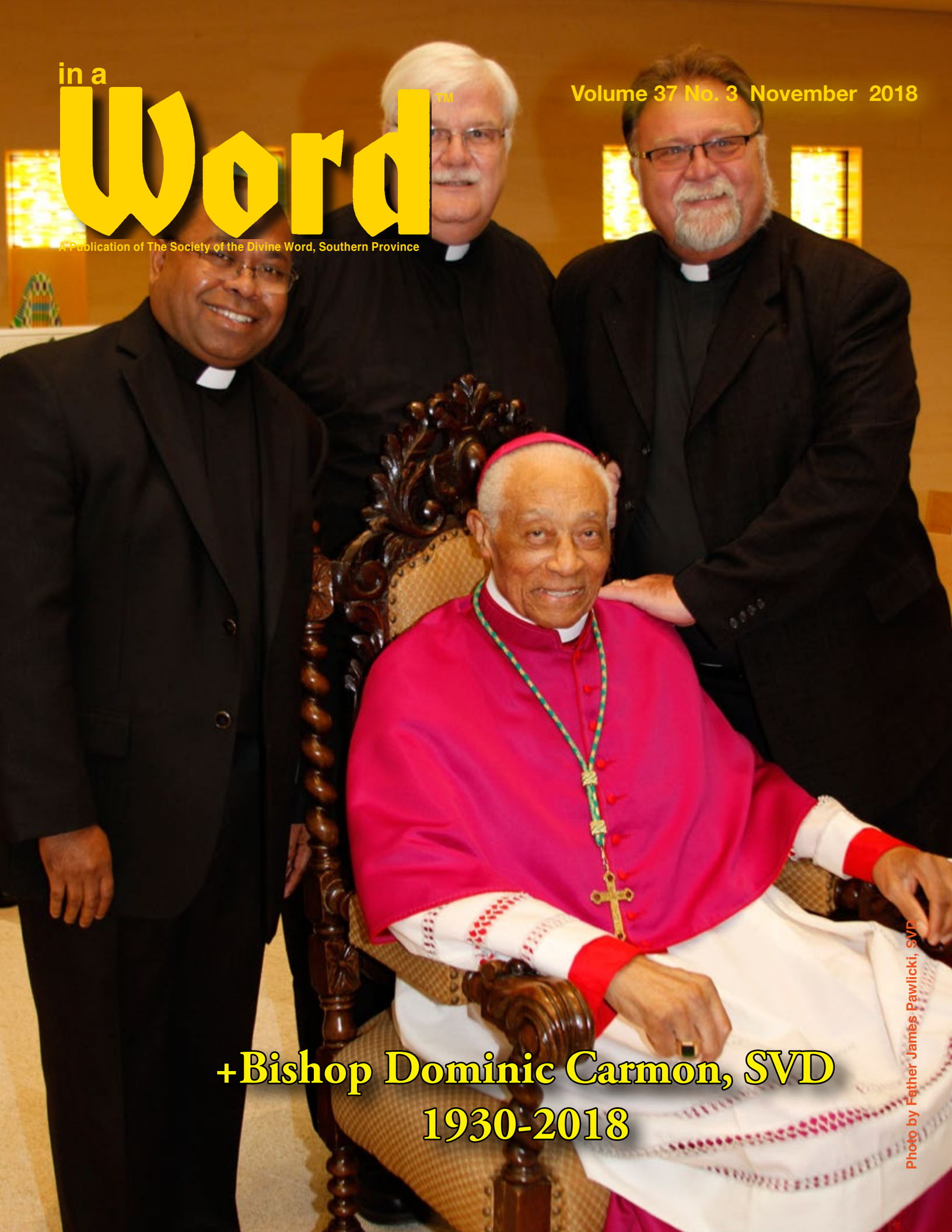


in a

# Word

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**+Bishop Dominic Carmon, SVD  
1930-2018**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# Bishop Dominic Carmon, SVD 'A Humble, Servant Leader' Dies At 87

By Peter Finney Jr.

New Orleans Auxiliary Bishop Dominic Carmon, a missionary priest of the Society of Divine Word who was cherished for his ability to bring spiritual healing to parishioners, died Nov. 11 at Chateau de Notre Dame in New Orleans. He was 87.



Bishop Carmon at installation as Bishop Feb. 11, 1993

**“We use the term ‘servant leader’ a lot, but he was a humble, servant leader,” said Archbishop Gregory Aymond. “He was truly a servant of God’s people, and he led by example and by his way of life. He was one of the most humble people I’ve ever met. He brought the divine word of God to people through his preaching and teaching, but in a very particular way, he brought the divine word to people by his attitudes, actions and love.”**

After serving for nearly five years at St. Frances Cabrini, Bishop Carmon was asked by then-Archbishop Francis Schulte to assume the pastorate at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Kenner, which had suffered through a very public division attributed in part to delays in building a new parish church and the retirement of the pastor, Father Al Ernst.

When Bishop Carmon succeeded Father Ernst, he made sure to let the retired priest know he was always welcome in the parish to preside at baptisms, weddings and funerals and to celebrate Sunday Masses from time to time. “(We had) a very good talk, and obviously he is hurting,” Bishop Carmon said when taking over at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. “I plan to make him feel at home.”

Bishop Carmon then scheduled meetings with parishioners to discuss “what they feel we need to do for the future.” He tried to heal the rifts by welcoming everyone and including

Bishop Carmon, a native of Opelousas, Louisiana, was ordained auxiliary bishop of New Orleans on Feb. 11, 1993, at St. Louis Cathedral. He served as pastor of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish in New Orleans from 1993 to 1997 and at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Kenner from 1997 until he retired in 2006, upon reaching his 75th birthday.



Bishop Carmon with brothers (from left) Clifton and Aubrey

those parishioners who may have been adversaries to work together on joint projects.

Bishop Carmon grew up in Frilot, Louisiana, near Opelousas, the eldest of seven children of Edna and Aristile Carmon. His father was a farmer-carpenter.

When he entered St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, in 1946, Bishop Carmon said he had no idea of the global reach of the ministry of the Society of the Divine Word.



Ordination 1960

“I just knew it was the place where black men who wanted to be priests went,” he told the Clarion Herald in 1993. He was ordained to the priesthood on Feb. 2, 1960.

The late Bishop Harold Perry, Bishop Carmon’s predecessor as an auxiliary bishop of New Orleans, was rector at St. Augustine Seminary when the young Dominic enrolled. Bishop Carmon was the second African-

American to be named an auxiliary bishop of New Orleans. “I’m honored to be following in his footsteps,” Bishop Carmon said. “We became good friends through the years.”

The newly ordained priest spent seven years as a missionary in Papua, New Guinea, which he always said were “the happiest of my life.” “A schoolmate (Father Ed Baur) in the seminary got me interested in the missions,” Bishop Carmon said. “He went to Wewak, New Guinea, after ordination, and it was through correspondence with him that I really became interested in New Guinea. “The work in New Guinea was very rewarding, very simplistic. Actually, it reminded me of my childhood on the farm. Living in the country, we had no electricity and no running water, just as in New Guinea. Life was good out there, with no material things to worry about, no gimmicks. We helped people improve their own lot in life. We had six churches in 21 villages.”

After seven years of service in New Guinea, Bishop Carmon came home for vacation and later completed a year of theological and liturgical studies in Nemi, Italy. Even though he had a written commitment from his provincial that he would return to New Guinea, he was asked to assume a pastorate in Chicago. He wound up staying from 1969 to 1988 as pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish and, later, Our Lady of the Gardens Parish in Chicago.

“I was told in the next 15 years we didn’t have enough black priests to take care of our needs in this country,” Bishop Carmon said. “In Chicago, I had a lot of parishioners who had a car and a bed, but they didn’t have much more. They were struggling for survival probably more than the New Guinea people.”



Chicago 1969

At Our Lady of the Gardens in Chicago, he fostered a successful gang-prevention program. “We did pretty well with that, keeping the kids busy with sports and roller skating when they were out of school,” he said. “We had a huge gym and turned it into a roller rink and basketball area. The kids loved it.” The bishop loved it, as well, skating with the kids until he suffered a knee injury.

Bishop Carmon always kept at the forefront the thought of returning to the New Guinea missions, but in 1988, his

provincial assigned him to Holy Ghost Church in his hometown of Opelousas. That church also had been divided by factions, but Bishop Carmon invited the former pastor to give a parish mission during Lent as a way of promoting healing.

Bishop Carmon said he was looking forward to spending the rest of his priestly ministry in the country until he got the call in late 1992 that Pope John Paul II was appointing him as auxiliary bishop of New Orleans. He did not think that was possible, in part because in 1990, he had a serious brush with cancer. Doctors told him February that year that he might not live to Easter. “I thought something like that would preclude any advancement,” Bishop Carmon said.

Bishop Carmon was given a medal of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and parishioners began a novena to her asking for him to be cured. After about three weeks of treatment, changes began occurring in his body that doctors could not understand. “I went ahead with the full course of treatment,” he said. “If I didn’t believe in miracles before, I do now. And I have a doctor who also believes in miracles.”

Archbishop Aymond said in the last two years, Bishop Carmon’s health had begun to slip. But until that time, he had asked the archbishop to allow him to continue presiding at confirmations. “As he grew older and he wasn’t able to do as much, I even discussed with him whether he could do confirmations, and he told me, ‘Yes, I want to continue doing them,’” Archbishop Aymond said. “I remember hearing him at one of our bishops’ support groups say that he was so glad ‘that Greg allows me to do confirmations.’ He did them until he just physically couldn’t

do them anymore.

“I don’t think on earth he knew the number of hearts that he touched by his gentleness, his pastoral care and his thoughtful preaching,” Archbishop Aymond said. “Perhaps he does know now. He mentioned to me at the Chateau that he was going to die on a Sunday – and he did – the day of the Lord’s resurrection.”

Funeral Mass for Bishop Carmon was celebrated at St. Louis Cathedral by Archbishop Gregory Aymond. His burial place is in the sanctuary of St. Louis Cathedral.



Bishop Carmon at installation as Bishop Feb. 11, 1993



Bishop Joseph Francis, SVD and Bishop Joseph Howze lay hands on new Bishop Carmon



Carmon with long time friend Jerome LeDoux, SVD

*Peter Finney, Jr. is Editorial Executive Editor/General Manager of the Clarion Herald the Catholic newspaper for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Mr. Finney had been a close friend of Bishop Carmon since his installation in 1993. This article appeared in the Clarion Herald on November 12 and is used with permission.*

# in a word or two

At the end of the funeral service for Bishop Dominic Carmon, SVD on November 17, 2018 **Archbishop Gregory Aymond summed up the life of Dominic Carmon by saying "Like Jesus he came to serve and not be served."**

This is a fitting tribute to an extraordinary man who touched the lives of too many to be counted. As Father Jerome Ledoux, SVD remarks: "Dominic never changed from the country boy mystique of Frilot Cove, Louisiana to the city slicker persona of big-town people. **He had a charm that grew only better with the passage of time.** No city slicker could hold a candle to the man he became."

We Divine Word Missionaries treasured this giant of a man. He loved all the people he served whether it was in New Guinea, Chicago, Opelousas and New Orleans. Yet he never forgot he was a Divine Word Missionary. That is why we have on the front cover not a photo of only himself but with young Divine Word missionaries whom he treasured.

Someone asked us here at *IN A WORD* if we think he should be canonized as a Saint of the Church. We think anyone who knew him and was touched by his warm personality would agree that he is indeed a Saint.

We have lost a good man but his spirit of service and faithfulness to the Gospel of love will forever be with us.

Rest in Peace Bishop Dominic Carmon. Thank you for being like Jesus serving rather than being served.



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. *IN A WORD* is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; consultant.

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