

# As in his life, all welcomed at Cardinal Keeler's funeral Mass

Mourners from near and far, and all walks of life and various creeds, filled the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland March 28 for the funeral Mass of Cardinal William H. Keeler, 14th archbishop of Baltimore.

Thirty prelates, including six cardinals, and dozens of priests and deacons mourned Cardinal Keeler, who died March 23 at 86, and commended his soul to God.

Dignitaries and officials came to pay their respects, including Maryland Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr., Baltimore County Executive Kevin B. Kamenetz, retired U.S. Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski and State Sen. James "Ed" DeGrange Sr.



*Gov. Lawrence Hogan Jr. was among the mourners at Cardinal Keeler's funeral Mass. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

While a churchman of the highest stature, to be sure - Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori in his closing remarks ranked Cardinal Keeler among the most illustrious of his predecessors, including Archbishop John Carroll, Cardinal James Gibbons and Cardinal Lawrence Shehan - many came to Cardinal Keeler's funeral to remember a man who had simply never forgotten them.

"He always remembered who I was and what church I came from," said Jo Anne Harris, mother of Father Raymond Harris, who was ordained by Cardinal Keeler and now serves as pastor of Holy Family Parish in Randallstown. "You would always get a smile and a handshake, and you knew it wasn't phony. It was from the heart."

Sheila Peter, a cathedral parishioner, remembered bringing her son, Tommy, then 10, to see Cardinal Keeler in the sacristy after a Good Friday Veneration of the Cross.

"I said, 'Here's a big fan of yours,' and the cardinal held his (zucchetto) over Tommy's head and we took a picture," she said.



*Priests and deacons from throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore and beyond*

*attended. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

Mary Lou LaMartina, a parishioner of St. Agnes in Catonsville, recalled two very young children from her parish who were sometimes brought to daily Mass at St. Martin's Home for the Aged in Catonsville after Cardinal Keeler retired there.

"They would run up and say, 'Cardinal Keeler, can we have your blessing?'" LaMartina remembered. "Even if he didn't have any energy, he would put his hand on their heads."

"He was just a dear," said Patricia Frederick, also a parishioner of St. Agnes in Catonsville and a volunteer docent at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore. "He was everything people say he was."

People said a lot.

In his homily, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, archbishop of New York, described the "indefatigable, friendly, ever-unflappable gentleman of faith, William Cardinal Keeler," who took to heart a bit of advice to priests from St. John Paul II:

"Love for Jesus and his church must be the passion of your life."

"He not only knew the quote, he lived it and radiated it," Cardinal Dolan said.

He and others acknowledged that Cardinal Keeler's passion overflowed, particularly in the ecumenical and interreligious arena.



*New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan preaches the homily. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

When he stepped down as moderator for Jewish affairs for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, a position that included co-chairing key dialogue between the two faiths, Cardinal Keeler asked Cardinal Dolan to take over, the latter recalled.

"I had rehearsed my 'No,' having just arrived in New York and obviously preoccupied, but he described the dialogue with such zeal and excitement, it sounded like he was inviting me to a game at Camden Yards, with all the cold beer and hotdogs, kosher, I could eat," Cardinal Dolan said.

Cardinal Keeler's "zeal and excitement" for working with the Jewish community was reciprocated.

Before the funeral Mass, Rabbi Abie I. Ingber, executive director of the Center for Interfaith Community Engagement at Xavier University in Cincinnati, reflected on what the cardinal had meant to him.

"We could start with the word 'everything,'" Rabbi Ingber said, recalling how Cardinal Keeler had introduced him to St. John Paul II in 1999, a meeting that "directed" the next 18 years of his life, inspiring him to help build an exhibit on the saint and the Jewish people, "A Blessing to One Another."

Over the years, Rabbi Ingber and Cardinal Keeler continued their correspondence and visits, and the rabbi came to see the cardinal, when his health was failing, at St. Martin's Home for the Aged.

"I asked for his blessing and I gave him mine," Rabbi Ingber said.

As he looked around the cathedral, he noted that his grandparents had been murdered in the Holocaust.

"Here I am, the grandchild of Jews who were killed at the Holocaust, lovingly seated at the funeral of a cardinal of the Catholic Church," he said. "That's a good world."



*Mourners pray during Cardinal Keeler's funeral Mass. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

The liturgy included a message from Pope Francis, delivered and read by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S., in which the pope expressed his condolences for the loss of the "wise and gentle pastor."

The readings and Gospel held special meaning for the cardinal, who chose them himself.

In the first reading, Moses exhorts the Israelites to "love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, your whole being, and with your whole strength" (Deut 6:5).

The cardinal's episcopal motto, "Do the work of an evangelist," came from the words of second reading:

“But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5).

The Gospel described Jesus’ call to his first Apostles, Peter, Andrew, James and John, who left their work as fishermen to follow him.



*Archbishop William E. Lori looks out into the congregation. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

At the conclusion of the Mass, Archbishop Lori, the main celebrant, thanked members of the cardinal’s family “for sharing Cardinal Keeler with us all these many years, and sharing him so generously.”

He also thanked the Little Sisters of the Poor, who operate St. Martin’s Home, “For welcoming him into your home as you would welcome Christ.”

“And in particular,” the archbishop said, “I’d like to thank Sister Lourdes for her special loving care.”

The sisters received a standing ovation.

The archbishop also reflected on the last four or five years of Cardinal Keeler’s life, drawing a parallel between it and the “grand silence,” a former seminary tradition which called for silence from 9 p.m. every evening until Holy Mass was celebrated the following day.

It was not the most popular rule, the archbishop remembered, “and rumor has it there were many infractions – I wouldn’t know about that.”

Nevertheless, Archbishop Lori said, the grand silence was valuable as a time of prayer and rest which “taught the important lesson of preparing one’s mind and heart for the next day and the important responsibilities each new day brings.”

“Over these last four or five years, nature gradually imposed on Cardinal Keeler what we might term a ‘grand silence,’” the archbishop continued, adding that, though it was a “heavy cross,” he was “impressed by the cardinal’s silence, for even in his silence, William Henry Keeler maintained a beautiful dignity” rooted in his person and manifested in his friendships and care for the church.

Furthermore, Archbishop Lori said, the cardinal's final "grand silence" was a new part of his formation, "a crucible where his priestly heart was purified for the job of seeing God face-to-face."

Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem and archbishop emeritus of Baltimore, offered the final commendation, and Cardinal Keeler's eight pallbearers carried his remains out of the cathedral, where deacons, priests, bishops and cardinals chanted "Salve Regina."

A funeral procession brought his remains to their final resting place, the Baltimore Basilica.

*To see more photos, visit our [SmugMug page](#) here.*

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