

# **Bishop Morlino dies; increasing vocations was one of his top priorities**

MADISON, Wis. — Bishop Robert C. Morlino, the fourth bishop of Madison, died Nov. 24 at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison. He was 71.

The bishop was undergoing planned medical tests when he suffered what doctors described as “a cardiac event” at the hospital and he never recovered.

Funeral arrangements were pending.

“All objective indicators point to the fact that Bishop Morlino accomplished what he set out to do in the diocese” after his Aug. 1, 2003, installation, the diocese said in a statement.

Among his “three expressed priorities” was increasing “the number and quality of the men ordained to the diocesan priesthood,” it said. “Fostering greater priestly vocations” resulted in his ordination of 40 men to the priesthood during his tenure. Another 24 are currently in formation.

Bishop Morlino also aimed “to instill a greater sense of reverence throughout the entire diocese, especially through our worship of God, celebrated in the holy sacrifice of the Mass,” the diocese said, “and to challenge Catholic institutions in the diocese to live out their professed faith in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, through their ministry in the secular community.”

He succeeded in “bringing a greater sense of reverent worship to the entire diocese,

and he made significant inroads toward encouraging the Catholic institutions in his care to live out their mission with greater fidelity, during his 15-plus years as bishop of Madison,” the diocese said. “We pray this continues.”

Born Dec. 31, 1946, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Robert Charles Morlino was an only child. His father, Charles, died while he was in high school; his mother, Albertina, died in 1980. He was raised in Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, graduating from the Jesuit-run Scranton Preparatory High School.

He entered the seminary for the Maryland province of the Society of Jesus and was ordained to the priesthood for that province June 1, 1974. His education included a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Fordham University, a master’s degree in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame, and a master of divinity degree from the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

He also had a doctorate in moral theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, with a specialization in fundamental moral theology and bioethics.

Father Morlino taught philosophy at what is now Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, St. Joseph University in Philadelphia, Boston College, and the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary’s College in Indiana. He also served as an instructor in continuing education for priests, religious and laity and as director of parish renewal programs

In 1981, Father Morlino became a priest of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and served there as vicar for spiritual development, executive assistant and theological consultant to the bishop, as moderator of the curia and as the promoter of justice in the diocesan tribunal. He was administrator of a number of parishes, and later rector of St. Augustine Cathedral in Kalamazoo.

Father Morlino was scheduled to begin a full-time faculty appointment as professor

of theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit when, on July 6, 1999, St. John Paul II appointed him the ninth bishop of Helena, Montana.

Bishop Morlino was named fourth bishop of Madison May 23, 2003, and installed about three months later.

On the national level, Bishop Morlino is a past chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Diaconate and its Ad Hoc Committee on Health Care Issues and the Church.

He also served on the Bishops and Presidents Subcommittee of the USCCB's Committee on Education, which focuses on the Catholic identity of institutions of higher education. Bishop Morlino also was a past chairman of the board of directors of the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, which conducts research, consultation, publishing and education to promote human dignity in health care and the life sciences.

Bishop Morlino also was chairman of the board of visitors for the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. This board was a federal advisory committee created by congress to maintain independent review, observation and recommendation regarding operations of the institute, located at Fort Benning, near Columbus, Georgia.

Run by the U.S. Department of Defense, the institute is an education and training facility for civilian, military and law enforcement personnel from Western Hemisphere countries. For his service to the United States and his promotion of human rights education, the bishop was honored by the Department of the Army in 2009.

In 2006, the national Alliance for Marriage joined with the Congress of Racial Equality to present Bishop Morlino with their Lifetime Achievement Award, for his

promotion of the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

In 2008, for his work in defense of the dignity of the human person, Bishop Morlino was awarded Human Life International's Cardinal von Galen Award, named after the famous German bishop who worked actively against the Nazis. That same year, he also received the St. Edmund's Medal of Honor, awarded to Catholics "who have used their God-given talents in promoting the common good."

In 2015, he was the recipient of Relevant Radio's Christ Brings Hope Award and earlier this year, he received the St. Thomas Aquinas College Medallion.

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