

Waldheim, Hernandez among Catholics who died in 2007

WASHINGTON - Former Austrian President Kurt Waldheim and Tutela Legal director Maria Julia Hernandez, each of whom took center stage during two of the thorniest international debates of the 1980s, were among the prominent Catholics who died in 2007.

Waldheim, 88, who had been U.N. secretary-general from 1972 to 1981, died June 14 in Vienna, Austria. Controversy raged during his 1986 campaign for the Austrian presidency, a largely ceremonial post, because he had not been fully truthful about his activities as a German army officer during World War II.

During Waldheim's term as Austrian president, Pope John Paul II was the only Western leader to officially meet him as a head of state. The 1987 meeting at the Vatican was the Austrian's first foreign state visit after being elected president, and it sparked an outpouring of criticism from Israel and Jewish organizations.

Hernandez, 68, who for more than two decades led the San Salvador Archdiocese's internationally recognized human rights agency Tutela Legal, died March 30 in El Salvador. Hernandez had worked alongside Archbishop Oscar A. Romero, who was killed in 1980, just one of many flash points for human rights advocates in a decade-long civil war between the military government and civilian rebels.

Upon taking over as head of Tutela Legal in 1982, Hernandez established a long record of objective investigations of abuses committed by the Salvadoran military and the rebels. Despite repeated death threats, Hernandez continued to challenge official reports of what was happening in her country.

The Catholic Church lost seven of the world's cardinals during 2007.

Spanish Cardinal Antonio Javierre Ortas, 85, former prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments who in 1994 issued the rules officially stating that local bishops could allow women and girls to be altar servers, died Feb. 1 in Rome.

Italian Cardinal Angelo Felici, 87, former head of the Vatican's Congregation for Saints' Causes, died June 17 in Italy.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, 80, the Jewish-born former archbishop of Paris who defended the right of believers to have a say in public debates, passed away Aug. 5 in Paris.

Canadian Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, 89, former head of the Pontifical Council for the Family and former president of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, died Aug. 25 in Montreal.

Cardinal Adam Kozłowiecki, 96, a Polish-born Jesuit who worked more than 50 years as a missionary in Zambia and the retired archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, died Sept. 28 in Lusaka.

Venezuelan Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara, 85 president of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of Canon Law, died Oct. 16 in Caracas, Venezuela.

Japanese Cardinal Stephen Fumio Hamao, 77, retired president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers, died Nov. 8 in Tokyo.

Also, retired Bishop Ignacy Jez of Koszalin-Kolobrzeg, Poland, 93, a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, died Oct. 16 in Rome – one day before he would have been named a cardinal.

Other notable Catholic figures who died in 2007 included:

- Bishop Joseph Meng Ziwen of Nanning, China, 103, clandestinely ordained in 1984, Jan. 7 in China.
- Abbe Pierre, 94, born Henri-Antoine Groues and founder of the Emmaus Community in France which shelters the homeless in more than three dozen countries, Jan. 22 in Paris.
- Hanley Denning, 36, known in Guatemala as “the angel of the garbage dump” because she helped poor children escape garbage picking as a livelihood, Jan. 18 outside Guatemala City.

- Jesuit Father Robert F. Drinan, 86, the first Catholic priest to vote in the U.S. Congress, Jan. 28 in Washington. He represented Massachusetts' 3rd District in Congress for five terms, from 1971 to 1981, but did not run again on orders from his Jesuit superiors.
- Jesuit Father Joseph R. Hacala, 61, former head of the (Catholic) Campaign for Human Development and of Wheeling (W.Va.) Jesuit University, Feb. 19 in Rochester, Minn.
- Bishop Jose Ivo Lorscheiter, 79, the retired bishop of Santa Maria, Brazil, and one of the most outspoken bishops in Brazil during the country's military regime, March 5 in Santa Maria.
- Actress-singer Betty Hutton, 86, who starred in many top film comedies and musicals in the 1940s and '50s, March 11 in Palm Springs, Calif.
- Bowie Kuhn, 80, who became deeply involved in Catholic causes following his 1969-84 tenure as baseball commissioner and was elected in December to baseball's Hall of Fame, March 15 in Jacksonville, Fla.
- Dr. John Billings, 89, who co-founded the ovulation-based natural family planning method that bears his name, April 1 in Richmond, Australia.
- Retired Bishop Michael J. Murphy of Erie, Pa., who was one of Pope John Paul II's first appointments, April 3 in Erie.
- Jack Valenti, 85, a former White House assistant who ran the Motion Picture Association of America for almost four decades, April 26 in Washington.
- Walter Hubbard Jr., 82, a national African-American Catholic leader who had headed the Seattle-based National Office for Black Catholics since 1970, May 5 in Seattle.
- Retired Bishop Michael J. Dudick 91, of the Byzantine Diocese of Passaic, N.J., May 30 in Schuylkill Haven, Pa.
- Retired Bishop Marion F. Forst of Dodge City, Kan., 96, the oldest U.S. bishop and

one of the world's 12 oldest bishops at the time of his death, June 2 in Olathe, Kan.

- Father Peter Dally, one of the first married Episcopal priests to be ordained a Catholic priest under a special Vatican provision, July 6 in Olympia, Wash

- Carl J. Pfeifer, 78, a photographer, author and former Jesuit priest known for his work in catechetical writing and publishing, July 12 in Dubuque, Iowa.

- Precious Blood Sister Andree Fries, 65, director of the National Religious Retirement Office, which is responsible for the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection, July 14 in Baltimore.

- French-born Assumptionist Father George H. Tavard, 86, a noted ecumenist, Aug. 13 in Paris.

- Phil Rizzuto, 89, a Hall of Fame shortstop and later broadcaster for the New York Yankees, Aug. 14 in West Orange, N.J.

- Robert B. Beusse, 77, a former secretary of communications for the U.S. bishops who was instrumental in establishing the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Catholic Communication Campaign, Aug. 14 in Caldwell , N.J.

- Retired Bishop Gerard L. Frey, former leader of the dioceses of Savannah, Ga., and Lafayette, La., Aug. 16 at his home near Lafayette.

- Jane Wyman, whose age was variously placed at between 90 and 93, an Oscar-winning actress once married to future President Ronald Reagan and who joined the Catholic Church as an adult, Sept. 10 in Rancho Mirage, Calif.

- Benedictine Abbot Claude Ehringer, 98, founder of Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, Calif., which he founded and where he lived for nearly five decades, Sept. 17 in Oceanside.

- Jesuit Father James A. Martin, believed to be the world's oldest Jesuit at age 105, Oct. 1 in Washington.

- Holy Ghost Father Lucien Deiss, 86, a liturgical music composer and a liturgical consultant at the Second Vatican Council, Oct. 9 in his native France.

- U.S.-born Archbishop Ambrose De Paoli, 73, the Vatican nuncio to Australia, Oct. 10 in Miami Beach, Fla.
- Religion reporter and editor Gerald Renner, 75, who in 1997 broke the original story of abuse allegations against Legionaries of Christ founder Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, Oct. 24 in Norwalk, Conn.
- Actor-singer Robert Goulet, 73, known for his baritone voice and his role in the original Broadway production of "Camelot," Oct. 30 in Los Angeles.
- Retired Bishop James D. Niedergeses of Nashville, Tenn., 90, who also was a pastor and teacher, a prison and hospital chaplain, Nov. 16 in Nashville.
- Martin McLaughlin, 89, whose longtime advocacy for the poor and hungry included work as a consultant to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Nov. 27 in Arlington, Va.
- Henry Hyde, 83, the former Republican congressman from Illinois whose name became synonymous with efforts to limit federal funding of abortion, Nov. 29 in Chicago.
- Gordon Zahn, 89, veteran peace activist who was a co-founder of Pax Christi USA, the U.S. branch of the international Catholic peace movement, Dec. 9 in Wauwatosa, Wis.