

Obituary

Bishop Andrew J. McDonald
Little Rock

Bishop Emeritus Andrew J. McDonald, known throughout Arkansas as the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Little Rock for 28 years, died Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at St. Joseph's Home for the Elderly in Palatine, Illinois. He was 90 years old.

Bishop McDonald served the Catholic Church for 65 years. He was a priest for the Diocese of Savannah, Ga., from 1948 to 1972 and Bishop of Little Rock from 1972 to 2000. After retirement, he began a new ministry in 2002 as chaplain for the Little Sisters of the Poor and the elderly residents at St. Joseph's Home in Palatine. In 2013, he retired as chaplain but remained at the Home as a resident.

Andrew Joseph McDonald was born in Savannah, Ga., to James and Theresa McDonald on October 24, 1923, the eleventh of twelve children. When he was 13 years old, he entered the minor seminary of St. Charles College in Catonsville, Md., to begin his studies for the priesthood. In 1948, he graduated from St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore and was ordained a priest on May 8. Shortly after ordination, he began studying canon law at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., later transferring to the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, Italy, where in 1951 he received his doctorate in canon law.

His parish assignments in the Diocese of Savannah included assistant pastor at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist; associate pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Port Wentworth; and pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Savannah from 1963 until 1972. Between 1952 and 1972 he served in various diocesan roles, including judicial vicar, chancellor, and vicar general. He was named a Monsignor in 1956 and was appointed a domestic prelate with the title Right Reverend Monsignor in 1959.

He was ordained a bishop September 5, 1972, in Savannah and was installed as the fifth Bishop of Little Rock two days later at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock, Arkansas.

He traveled Arkansas as the bishop for 28 years, using his humor, preaching, and concern for others to shepherd the Diocese of Little Rock. During his episcopacy, there were many accomplishments and new initiatives as he implemented the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council. Focusing in particular on the increased participation of the laity in the mission of the church, he encouraged the establishment of numerous lay movements, including Cursillo, Search, Catholic charismatic renewal, Marriage Encounter, Retroville, youth ministry, and campus ministry. He established several advisory boards, including the Council for Black Catholics, the Clergy Welfare

Board, the diocesan Council for Women Religious, and the diocesan Building Commission. He worked to provide affordable housing for the elderly through the establishment of Good Shepherd Home in Little Rock and Christopher Homes throughout the state. He spoke and worked for the poor, supporting the establishment of Catholic Charities of Arkansas. He was active in ecumenical and interreligious efforts and worked with the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. He reached out to the Vietnamese and Hispanic Catholics who moved into the diocese. Catholic schools and religious education were always important to Bishop McDonald. He supported the growth and development of Little Rock Scripture Study, continuing education for the clergy, and the restoration of the permanent diaconate. He always encouraged vocations to the permanent diaconate, priesthood, and religious life. While he was bishop, the Cathedral of St. Andrew and St. John Center in Little Rock were renovated, and St. John Manor was opened to provide a residence for retired diocesan priests.

Of all his efforts, none were more important to Bishop McDonald than his work for the unborn. He was a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pro-Life Committee, participated every year in the Arkansas March for Life, and inaugurated an annual Mass for Life. In 1982, he wrote to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who responded with a personal visit to Little Rock during which she agreed to send the Missionaries of Charity to operate Abba House, a home for pregnant women and their children. He opened Catholic Adoptions Services and supported the implementation of Project Rachel, an outreach to women suffering from the consequences of abortion.

In 2000, Pope John Paul II accepted his resignation when Bishop McDonald was 76 years old. The bishop continued to live in Little Rock until March 2002, when he became chaplain at St. Joseph's Home in Palatine, Illinois.

Bishop McDonald loved being with people. He was a 4th Degree member of the Knights of Columbus Assembly #173 in Savannah and a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Over the years, he led many pilgrimages to Rome, Lourdes, Ireland, and the Holy Land. He enjoyed playing a quick game of golf and keeping up with his favorite football teams. He was known for his humor, his smile, his laugh. He had many friends among bishops and priests around the country. Bishop McDonald loved the clergy, religious, and laity of Arkansas. He loved his home of Savannah, Georgia, and was proud of his family and his Irish heritage. Bishop McDonald will be missed and remembered in prayer by many.

He was preceded in death by his parents, James Bernard and Theresa Ann (nee McGreal) McDonald; eight sisters: Alice Elizabeth Hiltz, Mary Dorothy McDonald (Sister M. Aurelia, CSJ), Josephine Frances McDonald (Sister Celine of St. Rose, LSP), Mary Bernadette Pigman, Genevieve Clare McDonald (Sister M. Incarnata, RSM), Theresa Ann McDonald (Sister Mary James, CSJ), Ann Frances Jordan, and Eleanor Rosalie Arnett; and three brothers: James J. McDonald, Eugene B. McDonald, and

Richard A. McDonald. He is survived by one sister-in-law, Julia McDonald of Atlanta, and 78 nieces and nephews spanning four generations.

The reception of the bishop's body will take place at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2014. At 7 p.m. on Monday, April 7, a vigil service with rosary will be held at the Cathedral and will be followed by an all-night vigil, during which the Cathedral will remain open for prayer and visitation. The Mass of Christian Burial and interment will be celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Andrew on Tuesday, April 8 at 11 a.m. Prior to the transfer of the bishop's body to Little Rock, a special visitation, rosary, and Funeral Mass will be held at St. Joseph's Home in Palatine, Illinois.

As requested by Bishop McDonald, memorials may be made to the Bishop Andrew J. McDonald Burse Fund to be used in perpetuity for the educational expenses of seminarians studying for the Diocese of Little Rock. Donations should be payable to: Diocesan Seminarian Fund, Inc., at P.O. Box 7239, Little Rock, AR 72217, with a notation "Bishop McDonald Burse."

Services provided by North Little Rock Funeral Home, 1921 Main St, North Little Rock, AR 72114, 501-758-1170. Online guestbook available at www.SmithFamilyCares.com