

Sent: Thu, 08 Oct 2009 09:27:49 -0400
From: "Smith, Michele" <michele_smith@ovp.eop.gov>
To: [REDACTED] ann.vignola@state.de.us,
Hunter Biden <hbiden@senecaga.com>,
[REDACTED]
Bcc: [REDACTED] ann.vignola@state.de.us, Hunter Biden
<hbiden@senecaga.com>,
Subject: FW: Bishop Saltarelli passed away

FYI

From: Smith, Michele
Sent: Thursday, October 08, 2009 9:22 AM
To: Hire, Elisabeth; Hoffman, Alan L.
Cc: Bernal, Anthony R.; Orloff, Nancy
Subject: RE: Bishop Saltarelli passed away
Importance: High

Funeral is likely to be next Wednesday at Saint Elizabeth's Church in Wilmington. We will have more details this afternoon.

From: Smith, Michele
Sent: Thursday, October 08, 2009 9:18 AM
To: Hire, Elisabeth; Hoffman, Alan L.
Cc: Bernal, Anthony R.
Subject: FW: Bishop Saltarelli passed away
Importance: High

P6/b(6)

[REDACTED] I will keep you posted on details as soon as they become available.

October 8, 2009

Former Bishop Saltarelli dies

By GARY SOULSMAN
The News Journal

Michael Saltarelli, the Jersey City youth who reveled in being a parish priest, but accepted an assignment to serve as bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wilmington for 12 years, died from cancer early today. He was 76.

Saltarelli died at 1:30 a.m., diocese officials announced.

With a strong Roman profile and a throaty accent, Saltarelli was hailed during his life as a "priest's priest" who was modest and self-effacing.

Sure in his calling to be a priest since he was 19, he was recalled as a pragmatic bishop with a grounding in faith who particularly enjoyed meeting parishioners during frequent visits to parishes up and down the Delmarva Peninsula.

"People joked that he traveled like he owned a helicopter," said the Rev. Tom Flowers of Smyrna. "During his busiest years, just reading his weekly schedule could make you tired."

His tenure as bishop from 1996 until he retired in 2008 was rocked by the priest sexual abuse scandal, and he faced financial and demographic shifts, including an influx of Spanish-speaking Catholic immigrants.

But he always said that his primary concern, in becoming both a priest and a bishop, was to ask: "Is the Gospel being practiced? Are we tending to the needs of the poor, the lonely, the outcast, the needy?"

Funeral services for Saltarelli have not been announced. His death was expected by the diocese. On Monday, Bishop Francis Malooly, Saltarelli's successor, sent an e-mail to parishes saying he was resting comfortably in hospice care at Christiana Care, and asking for prayers for the church leader.

"Everyone who knows him says he loved being a priest and never wanted to be a bishop," said Ellen Barrosse of Hockessin. "This was something thrust upon upon him and he took it reluctantly."

From 1996 to 2008 he managed a \$50 million annual budget and made decisions that affected schools, athletics and members of religious orders.

Saltarelli worked with American bishops to frame new policies protecting children and implemented them in the Diocese of Wilmington, where he was called on to handle a growing number of lawsuits against priests that resulted from Delaware's 2007 Child Victim's Act. That opened a two-year window during which victims could file suit for abuse at any time during their lives, effectively removing any statute of limitation.

While Saltarelli questioned how the law was crafted, he often apologized to victims and said church leaders erred in not dealing with the issue of abusive priests decades ago.

"I condemn what's been done to victims with all my heart," he said.

He settled several cases outside of court, saying he wanted to spare victims the agony of a trial.

Aware of the large influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants, he expanded the church's Hispanic ministry. He also formed a partnership between his diocese and the Diocese of Guatemala, which continues to flourish.

The bishop leaves an enormous legacy in bricks. He raised more than \$50 million soon after his arrival for new buildings in growing suburban and beach areas, Flower said. Money was also budgeted to pay for improvements in older parishes.

"Because of him we had a building boom unlike anything we've seen since the 1950s," Flowers said. "And every parish had a project."

The bishop added three new schools and several new churches, though he also had to close three parochial schools in Wilmington where attendance declined.

Saltarelli said he was most proud of having ordained 23 men as priests, though he wished it could have been 123.

"Their courage amazes me, inspires me and humbles me," he said. "Our seminarians are the heroes of the day."

"He led our diocese during difficult times, courageously choosing the right path, even when it was not the easy path," said Barrosse.

These were ideals he absorbed while growing up in an Italian working-class family of seven children. His Jersey City family went to weekly Mass and they saved to send the children to Catholic school.

As a teen the church became a hang out, one he never really left, after understanding that he did not have to be perfect to be a priest.

First assigned to a parish in Nutley, N.J., he stayed for 17 years and was sometimes described as a progressive and at other times as a moderate, having been shaped by the reforms of Vatican II that abandoned the Latin liturgy and increased the laity's participation.

Later as bishop of a diocese of 58 parishes and 230,000 members, he backed the laity's interest in having sculptor Charles Parks create a 30-foot steel statue of the Madonna. He suggested Our Lady Queen of Peace be placed, not at the riverfront as organizers first proposed, but at Holy Spirit parish in New Castle.

It was a good decision that protected the statue and has helped revive the parish, said John Watson, one of the members of the statue committee.

The bishop has also been known for encouraging children and often told people that Catholic schools were his favorite charity for the lifelong values they gave people.

"The first time I met him he was preaching at a confirmation and I was kind of surprised at how clear and fearless and truthful he was," Barrosse said.

"He was talking to teenagers and not trying to be cool or relevant but conveying the Christian message in clear and uncertain terms - calling on the young people to live it out."

Another time, he was visiting St. Mary Magdalen School when he a boy, who just learning about chess, raised his hand with a question.

"Is it true that a bishop can only move diagonally?" the boy asked.

Saltarelli laughed, as he loved to do.

It was a very good question, he told the boy.