NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

County coroner: Cardinal Bevilacqua died of natural causes

Matthew Gambino Catholic News Service | Mar. 8, 2012

PHILADELPHIA -- Suspicion surrounding the death of Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, former archbishop of Philadelphia, has been laid to rest with a Thursday coroner's report that he died of natural causes Jan. 31 at St. Charles Seminary in Wynnewood.

"Elderly people with pre-existent natural disease often die quite suddenly," Montgomery County Coroner Walter I. Hofman said Thursday at news conference at his office in Norristown.

Bevilacqua, 88, had been living at the seminary since his retirement in 2003.

Hofman said the cardinal had received excellent care for prostate cancer and dementia, and toxicology tests revealed normal levels of medications to treat the conditions.

He added that cancer had contributed to heart failure, which was the official cause of death.

"The coroner confirmed that Cardinal Bevilacqua was ailing, taking multiple prescription medications, and he died of natural causes," said Donna Farrell, archdiocesan communications director, who spoke Thursday at a press briefing at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Philadelphia. "It is what we believed and knew in our hearts all along, and this speculation can finally be laid to rest."

The Montgomery County district attorney had asked the coroner to perform tests on the cardinal's body shortly after his death, since he died one day after he had been judged competent to testify in the upcoming trial of current and former priests.

Bevilacqua headed the archdiocese from February 1988 to October 2003.

More than 1,000 people filled the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul for his funeral Mass on Feb. 7. He was interred in the cathedral crypt, joining Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan and Cardinals Dennis Dougherty and John Krol and his other predecessors.

Source URL (retrieved on *10/21/2014 - 19:43*): http://ncronline.org/news/people/county-coroner-cardinal-bevilacqua-died-natural-causes