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

# Late bishop a 'humble priest' whose spirituality touched thousands

Catholic News Service | Oct. 21, 2013
Rockville Centre, N.Y.

The "humility, sense of humor and, above all, spirituality" of retired Auxiliary Bishop James J. Daly of Rockville Centre, who died Oct. 14, "touched thousands and thousands of the faithful in a very deep and personal way," said the head of the diocese.

Bishop William Murphy said the late auxiliary bishop, who was 92 years old, was "truly a trailblazer and visionary during the early formative years of this diocese."

A funeral Mass was celebrated for Daly on Friday at the Cathedral of St. Agnes, followed by burial at St. Boniface Cemetery in Elmont, N.Y.

Murphy was the main celebrant, and concelebrants included Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York and several priests. The homilist was Msgr. James McNamara, episcopal vicar of the diocese's central vicariate and pastor Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Point Lookout.

In an Oct. 15 statement, Murphy noted that "so many of the people of God of this great diocese" experienced the late bishop's "witness as humble priest and later as auxiliary bishop."

Daly "was always a calm, peaceful and reassuring presence," he added.

Born Aug. 14, 1921, in the Bronx and raised in Queens, Daly was ordained a priest of the diocese of Brooklyn in 1948. He served in the Brooklyn diocese and then Rockville Centre as an assistant pastor, as a teacher and as procurator at the diocesan seminary, Immaculate Conception in Huntington.

As the Rockville Centre diocese's first director of priest personnel, the future Bishop Daly found himself, in 1968, helping to face some of the "new realities in the church,'" including the beginnings of the priest shortage.

"It's a hard job," he once said, because although one deals with many happy moments in priests' lives there are also tough ones, such as when a priest needs to be challenged about something. But he saw the job as a way of "being in service to priests."

Ordained an auxiliary bishop for Rockville Centre May 9, 1977, Daly said in an interview when he retired in 1996 that he enjoyed the weekend visitations he made to parishes and "never found confirmations boring."

One of the special tasks he took on as auxiliary bishop was his service on teams that were coordinated by the late Bishop John Marshall of Springfield, Mass., to conduct a pontifical visitation of every seminary in the United States. Daly took part in 12 such visitations, chairing 11 of them.

He also served on the Administrative Committee of the U.S. bishops' conference and on the National Advisory Council -- a group of bishops, priests, deacons, sisters and laypeople who advise the bishops on various issues.

When he retired at age 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops turn in their resignation, Daly said he had been a very happy priest but that he was "not unhappy about retiring" because it would give him time to read, to write and to pray more, he said.

For a number of years in retirement he carried out priestly work, including visiting the sick and celebrating the Eucharist.

He spoke with his greatest enthusiasm of his years as pastor of St. Boniface Parish in Elmont, in 1972-77. In the church, he said, "the pastor's job is the best -- the most satisfying and most rewarding."

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**Source URL (retrieved on *08/21/2014 - 21:13*):** http://ncronline.org/news/people/late-bishop-humble-priest-whose-spirituality-touched-thousands