

## Thomas Murphy, Archbishop Of Seattle Since '91, Dies at 64

By JOSEPH BERGER

Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy, who came to Seattle 10 years ago as part of a controversial power-sharing arrangement with a maverick Archbishop, Raymond G. Hunthausen, and stayed on to assume a full and stable command, died yesterday in a Seattle hospital. He was 64 years old.

Archbishop Murphy had been hospitalized for treatment of leukemia, a condition that was diagnosed late last year, and suffered a brain hemorrhage on Wednesday night.

"His was a peaceful, prayerful death, and the Archbishop was sent out of this life surrounded by prayer and song," said Jim Britt, a spokes-

*A cleric was part of a power-sharing arrangement with an archdiocese's maverick leader.*

man for the archdiocese, where bells tolled at St. James Cathedral with the announcement of the death.

Archbishop Murphy, born to Irish immigrants in Chicago, was a moderately liberal prelate who hewed firmly to the wishes of the Vatican on doctrinal matters but could surprise his own flock on purely ethical or policy dilemmas, like the conflict between loggers and environmentalists over preserving habitat for the spotted owl.

"There are moral issues in preserving forests," he told President Clinton at a 1993 conference on forests in Portland, Ore. "The timber crisis is a moral issue."

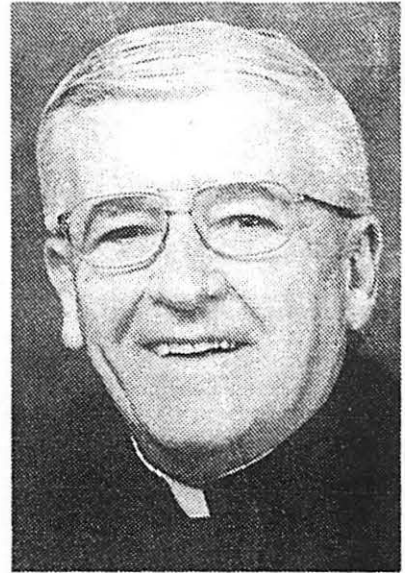
But the Archbishop's reputation beyond his own jurisdiction was largely a result of the shadow cast by his predecessor, the stubborn and idiosyncratic Archbishop Hunthausen.

Archbishop Hunthausen had become notorious in Rome, not only for his firm opposition to Seattle's nuclear submarines but for the freedoms he was permitting the 353,000 Catholics in a diocese that embraced all of Washington west of the Cascades. Catholic hospitals were performing sterilizations. Marriage annulments were flourishing. Homosexual groups gained uncommon entree.

With complaints from conservative Catholics mounting, the Vatican intervened in January 1986 by appointing Donald Wuerl as an auxiliary bishop, but with virtually unprecedented authority. He could actually supersede Archbishop Hunthausen in five liturgical and administrative areas. It was a devastating slap at the Archbishop, but it did not work. A firestorm of criticism swelled across the American church, with several American bishops publicly accusing the Vatican of seeking to impose an overbearing orthodoxy and warning that its actions were alienating many Catholics.

Some commentators called the Hunthausen imbroglio the most serious crisis faced by the American church in the 20th century. By May 1987, the Vatican backed down and a three-bishop commission brought in Thomas J. Murphy, then the Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, Mont., with marching orders far diminished from that handed Bishop Wuerl. The commission relieved Bishop Wuerl of his post, though he went on to become Bishop of Pittsburgh.

The new arrangement restored most of Archbishop Hunthausen's authority and gave Bishop Murphy the title of coadjutor archbishop, a



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Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy

job something between a consultant and a watchdog. The commission members suggested that Archbishop Hunthausen would consider it "prudent" to consult with his assistant on important matters.

In 1991, Bishop Murphy took command of the archdiocese when Archbishop Hunthausen retired five years before the mandatory retirement age.

Under the new Archbishop, the diocese entered a less contentious period. The Vatican approved and the name of Archbishop Murphy's name was prominently mentioned among possible candidates to succeed the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin as Archbishop of Chicago.

He was a vigorous leader who enjoyed visiting parishes and schools.

With the diocese suffering the same drop in commitments to the priesthood as the rest of the American church, Archbishop Murphy, who was ordained to the priesthood in 1958, after studying at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill., strove hard to persuade young men to join. "Vocations to the priesthood do not happen by accident," he said. "They are the result of encouragement and prayer."