

ARCHBISHOP THOMAS MURPHY, 1932-1997

Murphy: Passed along his faith and gave tirelessly of himself

Archbishop gave his attention to priests, the poor, teens

BY SALLY MACDONALD
Seattle Times religion reporter

If he could be remembered for one thing, Catholic Archbishop Thomas Murphy once told a friend, it would be as a man who passed on his Christian faith to others.

But Murphy, who died yesterday at Providence Seattle Medical Center, will leave a legacy much broader and more complex than that simple wish.

Murphy, who was 64, died after suffering a brain hemorrhage Wednesday night. He had been undergoing a second round of chemotherapy for acute myelogenous leukemia, a cancer of the blood, which was first diagnosed in December.

Friends, priests and others remembered the archbishop, spiritual leader for Catholics in Western Washington, as a man driven by compassion for the poor, concern for his priests and parishioners and a desire to have the church reflect its multicultural heritage.

Murphy saw an answer in every problem, they said, be it spiritual stagnation, unemployment in Western Washington's timber towns, too many teen pregnancies or too few priests-in-training.

The archbishop left behind a vibrant and growing archdiocese. There are about 353,000 registered Catholics in the archdiocese, up from 290,000 a decade ago. Murphy attributed the growth to people seeking deeper spiritual roots or moving here to work for high-tech industries and Boeing. But many who knew him consider Murphy himself a factor.

Murphy kept a grueling schedule, visiting as many as three or four parishes a day. He worked hard to make the church germane to young people and minority groups.

"Even as his own health became more and more frail, he continued to connect with young adults and students, to share with them what a gift life is and to urge them to be truly present to the poor, to be truly present to the sick," said Jim Britt, a spokesman for the archdiocese.

Murphy expressed dismay in recent years over the declining numbers of young men entering the priesthood. One part of his plan to solve the problem was to help support a Seattle University program that trains lay people to serve their parishes. "He really prodded us to offer more support for students who couldn't afford the program," said Provost John Eshelman.

"He always said you can't wait for priests to come to you," said Bob Corcoran, a friend and director of fund raising for the archdiocese. "He believed you had to go head-hunting for them. He also said one of the problems was that the church was rushing them into the priesthood. He believed they had to be nurtured better while they were in seminary."

As a result of Murphy's recruitment and encouragement, the Seattle Archdiocese is supporting some 30 young men in seminaries throughout the country. Per capita, that's more than any other diocese in the country, Corcoran said. And while most men who leave the priesthood do it within a year of ordination, none of Murphy's protégés has quit.

Murphy also nurtured those priests already in the trenches. The Rev. James Gandrau, of St. Alphonsus Church in Ballard, said Murphy was "a priest first, an archbishop second and an administrator third. He did much to restore the morale and confidence of the priests in the diocese. (He) was loved by everyone, but especially by his priests."

The archbishop was particularly conscious of the diverse nature of his churches, which included a woman's commission and ministries for African Americans, Asian-Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, Hispanics, Native Americans, Koreans, Laotians, Poles, Vietnamese, and gays and lesbians.

Murphy learned to speak Spanish so he could say Mass for the many Hispanics in his charge, Corcoran said.

Murphy's compassion for the poor is legendary.

Corcoran said that when President Clinton was visiting the Northwest to discuss impasses between timber workers and environmentalists, Murphy told him: "In our little towns in Western Washington, Mr. President, most of our people can't afford to go to McDonald's, one of your favorite places."

He came up with an idea for a program that has been one of the archdiocese's most successful. Through "Replanting Lives," the archdiocese funneled about \$500,000 to help jump-start small-business people in 10 timber communities.

Murphy also was concerned "that Catholics talk a lot about abortion but don't do enough to solve the problem," Corcoran said.

In 1992, the archdiocese opened Elizabeth House in South King County, where pregnant teens can get medical care and job training.

Murphy also believed in "sacrificial giving," in tithing because the Bible says it's the right thing to do, and in stewardship, or helping others.

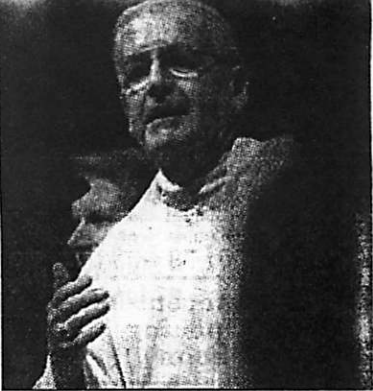
"He began talking years ago about sacrificial giving, giving the first fruits to God as the Bible says," Corcoran said. "He believed giving included giving of your time, your talent and your treasure, giving back to the Lord what He's given to you. Catholics weren't used to that kind of

talk, but it's become a success here."

Corcoran cited an increase in giving to the archdiocesan fund from \$7.1 million last year to \$7.5 million this year. And many more Catholics are volunteering their time at food banks, shelters and senior-citizen programs. Murphy, for years, was chairman of stewardship for the National Council of Catholic Bishops.

But Murphy's most lasting and wide-ranging legacy may be his unwavering personal faith and strong work ethic right up to the end.

"He was the model for all of us in



BARRY WONG / SEATTLE TIMES
Thomas Murphy spoke at St. James Cathedral in February.

his last days, whether Catholic or not," said Seattle University's Eshelman. "His real faith in the face of adversity over these last few months is awe-inspiring. No one could wish him going about his work without having real admiration for his faith and courage. He continued to bear and serve his people right up to the last, with a schedule that would have made a healthy man tired."

Seattle Times South bureau reporter Nancy Bartley contributed to this report.

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Services

- Tomorrow, 7:30 p.m. vigil, St. Joseph's Church, Vancouver, Wash.
- Sunday, 2 p.m. vigil, St. Michaels Church, Olympia.
- Sunday, 7:30 p.m. vigil, St. Charles Borromeo Church, Tacoma.
- Monday, 7:30 p.m. vigil, St. Mary Magdalen Church, Everett.

Here are the events to be held in St. James Cathedral:

Tuesday

2 p.m., rite of reception of the body; 4 p.m., the archbishop's body will lie in state in the cathedral until the funeral Mass on Thursday; 5:30 p.m., evening prayer; 9 p.m., night prayer.

Wednesday

8 a.m., rosary; 8:15 a.m., morning prayer; 12:10 p.m., midday prayer; 7:30 p.m., ecumenical vigil; 9 p.m., night prayer.

Thursday

8 a.m., rosary; 8:15 a.m., morning prayer; noon, funeral Mass; 2 p.m., reception; 3 p.m., rite of committal (the archbishop will be buried in the cathedral crypt).

Highlights in life of Archbishop Murphy

- 1932 — Born in Chicago. Attends Quigley Preparatory Seminary in Chicago and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill. Earns degrees in philosophy and religious studies.
- 1958 — Ordained in Chicago.
- 1967-1973 — Theology instructor, Loyola University, Chicago.
- 1968-1971 — Associate moderator, Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women.
- 1978 — Appointed bishop, Great Falls-Billings, Mont. Opposed the MX missile system and its possible deployment in the state. Faced with two parishes with no priests, Murphy recruited the diocese's first women pastoral administrators.
- 1987 — Appointed coadjutor archbishop of Seattle.
- 1991 — Assumes title of archbishop for the Archdiocese of Seattle, succeeding Raymond Hunthausen. At the time, Murphy spoke on his future legacy. "I hope people will be able to say I helped them to bring out the best within themselves and that they will do the same for me."
- 1991 — Generated news with his strong opposition to state Initiative 119, which would have allowed physician-assisted suicides, and Initiative 120, which preserves a woman's right to have an abortion in Washington.
- 1992 — Announces \$6 million plan to help alleviate hunger, poverty and homelessness in Tacoma.
- 1994 — As part of Washington State Catholic Conference, Murphy came out in opposition to legislative gay-rights initiative, despite urging from Gov. Mike Lowry and King County Executive Gary Locke to remain neutral.
- November 1996 — Following death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, Murphy was mentioned as possible successor in the 2.3 million-member archdiocese.
- 1996 — Diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia, a cancer of the blood.
- February 1997 — In celebrating "World Day of the Sick," Murphy makes first public appearance at St. James Cathedral after being diagnosed with leukemia.
- June 26, 1997 — Dies.