



3.1.2022

**Obituary for the Most Reverend Donald W. Trautman
Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Erie**

Bishop Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL, retired bishop of the Diocese of Erie, died Saturday, February 26, 2022, at St. Mary's at Asbury Ridge, Erie.

He was born June 24, 1936, in Buffalo, New York, the youngest of three children of the late Edward J. and Martha (Smith) Trautman. He was installed as the ninth bishop of Erie on July 16, 1990, and served until July 31, 2012, when Pope Benedict XVI accepted his mandatory resignation at retirement age.

Bishop Trautman attended St. Mark Elementary School in Buffalo and began his formation for the priesthood at the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary in 1950. From 1956-1958, he continued his priestly formation at Our Lady of the Angels Seminary, Niagara Falls, New York, with studies at Niagara University. He completed his formation and studies with the Jesuits at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, studying there

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from 1958-1962 under noted theologian Karl Rahner and renowned liturgist Josef Jungmann.

Bishop Trautman was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Buffalo, New York, in Innsbruck on April 7, 1962, by Bishop Paul Rusch. He obtained his licentiate in theology that same year. He began his priestly ministry as administrator of St. Francis Cabrini Parish in Collins Center, New York.

He started advanced studies at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1963, and in 1964 he continued his post-graduate studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, where he received his licentiate degree in Sacred Scripture (SSL) in 1965.

A year later, he was awarded his doctorate in sacred theology (STD), with honors, from St. Thomas Aquinas University (Angelicum), Rome. His doctoral dissertation concerned the biblical understanding of celibacy.

While he was a student in Rome, the Second Vatican Council was under way, and Bishop Trautman was asked to serve as a secretary at the historic gatherings in St. Peter's Basilica. He counted it among the highlights of his life.

From 1966-1973, Bishop Trautman served as professor of Scripture and theology at St. John Vianney Seminary, later known as Christ the King Seminary and now closed, in East Aurora, New York. He also served as dean of students and retreat master for religious communities. During that time, he was elected to the priests' senate and served as vice president and president of the Diocesan Pastoral Council in Buffalo. He also served a short time as secretary for Bishop Edward D. Head. In 1973, he was appointed diocesan chancellor, and a year later, was named vicar general of the Diocese of Buffalo.

Pope Paul VI named him prelate of honor, with the title of Monsignor, in 1975.

On Feb. 27, 1985, Bishop Trautman was named auxiliary bishop of Buffalo and titular bishop of Sassura by Pope John Paul II. He was consecrated auxiliary bishop on April 16, 1985, by Bishop Head at St. Joseph Cathedral in Buffalo, with Bishop Bernard McLaughlin and Bishop Stanislaus Brzana as co-consecrators.

While continuing as vicar general and auxiliary bishop in Buffalo, Bishop Trautman took on the pastorate of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in nearby Williamsville, New York, in May 1985.

Five years later, in June 1990, he became rector of Christ the King Seminary. That position was short-lived, however: On June 12, 1990, Pope John Paul II named him the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Erie.

Bishop Trautman took canonical possession of the Diocese of Erie on July 15, 1990, at an evening service at St. Peter Cathedral in downtown Erie. The next day, he was formally installed as bishop of Erie at a Mass at St. Peter Cathedral.

During his 22 years as bishop of the Diocese of Erie, Bishop Trautman distinguished himself as a man of letters, of mercy and of gifted homiletics.

Not long after moving into the bishop's residence in downtown Erie, he recognized the needs of the homeless community. Eventually, he inaugurated the successful Bishop's Breakfast Program in 2007, which provided breakfast on weekday mornings at the nearby St. Paul United Church of Christ, made possible by volunteers from neighboring parishes and staff of the St. Martin Center, an agency of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie. Plans had long been in the works to transition the program to be housed at Erie City Mission beginning March 1, 2022, which has now been accomplished, ensuring a permanent home for this charitable work.

Nationally, Bishop Trautman had a significant impact in both liturgy and church finances.

He was a vocal proponent of inclusive language in the liturgy, and twice served as chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, working closely on revisions to the Roman Missal and the revised translation of the Lectionary.

For two decades, Bishop Trautman was involved in the leadership of the Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference. He helped modernize accounting practices, set standards and establish professional guidelines for the way finances are handled in dioceses across the United States.

In the Diocese of Erie, Bishop Trautman led the 13 counties of northwest Pennsylvania under his chosen episcopal motto, "Feed My Sheep." He oversaw the mergers and closings of several

parishes and schools during that time, as well as the 2001-2003 diocesan capital campaign, "Celebrating Yesterday, Creating Tomorrow." In particular, he was a leader in the much-needed renovation of St. Peter Cathedral, the mother church of the diocese. He also oversaw the diocesan transition from the publication of a bi-weekly newspaper, the *Lake Shore Visitor*, to the bi-monthly *Faith* magazine.

Bishop Trautman was awarded several honorary doctorates from colleges and universities during his lifetime. Notre Dame University's Center of Pastoral Liturgy honored him with the Michael Mathis Award, its highest honor bestowed for outstanding contributions to liturgy. St. John's University in New York also honored Bishop Trautman with its Gold Medal. The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions' annual Msgr. Frederick R. McManus Award was presented to Bishop Trautman in 2003. He wrote and spoke extensively on liturgy and Scripture.

His tenure as bishop officially ended when Bishop Lawrence Persico was named tenth bishop of Erie on July 31, 2012, but he continued to guide the diocese as administrator until October 1, 2012.

Upon his retirement, Bishop Trautman resided at St. Mary's at Asbury Ridge, Erie, and remained active as a writer, lecturer and retreat master until the final years of his life.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Eugene Trautman, and his sister, Carol Trautman. Survivors include a niece, Catherine Trautman, and a nephew, Mark Trautman, both of Buffalo.

Public visitation will begin on Sunday, March 6, at 1:30 pm with the reception of the body at Our Lady of Peace Church, 2401 W. 38th St., Erie, Pa., 16506, and will continue until 6:00 pm. A public memorial Mass in the presence of the body will begin at 7:00 pm at Our Lady of Peace Church, followed by Vigil Prayers.

The funeral Mass for Bishop Trautman will be celebrated at St. Peter Cathedral, 10th and Sasfras streets, Erie, Pa., 16501, on Monday, March 7, at 1:00 pm. Seating in the cathedral is limited due to the ongoing renovations and the funeral will be open only to clergy and invited guests.

Bishop Lawrence T. Persico will preside at both the memorial Mass and the funeral Mass. A link to livestreams of both Masses will be found at www.Eriercd.org.

Bishop Trautman will be interred in the crypt of St. Peter Cathedral following the funeral Mass.

The Brugger Funeral Home, Erie, is handling funeral arrangements. Memorials may be made to the Bishop Donald W. Trautman Feed My Sheep Endowment, supporting youth and persons suffering from spiritual and material poverty, via the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania, and to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie.

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