

When the history of a Diocese is compiled and written, there is often a book that results, a book with many components. There are black and white first communion class photos. The sisters of the past are there. Included often are pictures and accounts of parishes and their history. Even ground breaking by elderly pastors in surplices and berrettas.

In many cases, there are also pictures of the different bishops – and sometimes photos of their wake or funeral and of all who attended. Those pictures are kept, treasured and they're remembered because the passing of one who was the shepherd is a moment of history. The shepherd at last has laid down his staff; the chapter is written, and his work is done.

That is where we find ourselves today – even as new chapters of the Church and the Diocese of Rockford will continue to unfold, the passing of Bishop Thomas Doran concludes a part of our spiritual history.

Last night and this morning, many came to pay their respects to Bishop Doran – and, most importantly, to pray for him. Our large crowd at this Mass continues the response on the part of the Diocese and the faithful of Rockford.

It is a sign of our deep sense of loss and our sharing that loss with Bishop Doran's family. To his sister Susanne who is here, and to Bishop Doran's cousins, you have our sympathy, our condolences and our prayers. But to you we also say thank you. Thank you because we know that priests are the product of many influences – but one of the most important is the family. He came from you. Thank you.

But other thanks are very much in order and they too are a part of our prayers this morning. Thanks to the priests and deacons who are here. Special

thanks to my brother Bishops who have come from Illinois, Wisconsin and other places to join us in this Mass. I am particularly grateful to Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago who as Metropolitan Archbishop of Chicago is the principal celebrant for us of this funeral Mass. Archbishop, we are very grateful for this the first of what we hope are many visits as Archbishop to the Cathedral of Rockford. Thanks as well to Bishop Tim Doherty of Lafayette in Indiana, a son of the Diocese. And thanks to Bishop Dave Kagan of Bismarck, another son of Rockford and a longtime collaborator with Bishop Doran.

I ask that for prayers and thanks for the many doctors and nurse who cared for Bishop Doran, especially in his final weeks and days. Doctor James Koepsel, Bishop Doran's personal physician and everybody at St. Anthony Medical Center. Thanks in a very special way to all who were part of Bishop Doran's hospice care givers. What a loving service you provided in the final days. And thank you to the staff, the P.A.'s the nurses and everyone at Cor Mariae. Thanks as well to Gwen Lashock who was so attentive to Bishop Doran. Thanks so Fr. Beauvais and the priest friends of Bishop Doran...

Thanks also to all of you on the Diocesan and Chancery staff who have prayed for Bishop Doran and supported him in special ways, not only recently but throughout his ministry. A few weeks ago, in one of our final conversations he whispered to me, because all he could do was whisper, about the staff, "They were loyal. They were very loyal." You know how he prized that loyalty, and what a comment of gratitude from him that was.

But most of all, we give thanks to God. Thank you God for this servant. Thomas was a priest for nearly 55 years. He was the Bishop of the Diocese of 18 years. And for four more years he contributed as an emeritus bishop.

Those are not simply milestones of longevity. That would be impressive enough. But as a Diocese, we are aware of how he served – how his priesthood and service as bishop touched us all.

That is why we pray in thanks to God today. We have benefitted from that servant.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.” Matthew records Jesus telling us, “By their fruits you will know them.” We might, then, reflect briefly, what were the fruits of the calling, of the priesthood and of the episcopal service of Thomas Doran?

- 1) The first is that he loved his Catholic faith. It defined his person. To know Thomas Doran was to know you had met a true believer. He loved Christ personally, and he knew Him through the Gospels, and he believed to his core that Jesus was the Son of God who died for us and that the human race is saved in the name of no other. He believed in Jesus’s resurrection and the offer to us to share in it that we heard in the readings that were just proclaimed.

But he believed also in what is in crisis today – that Jesus established the Church and that He guides it through the Holy Spirit and through the workings of the Pope – through the centuries of teaching and prayer and penance and sorrow and charity – and joy. He knew well the humanity of

the Church. Still, his faith, unwavering even unto his final days and hours, stood as an example, a challenge and as an encouragement.

It was love of the Church that marked one of the most telling contributions that Thomas Doran made. He left home to go to Rome, to the earthly heart of the Church, to study the Church's Law and then become an expert. He served at the Roman Rota, an American on the Appeals Courts of the Church. And when he returned home, he was a local and a national expert on the Church's law.

2) In addition to Jesus and His Church, there was another love in Bishop Doran's life. That was his love for the priesthood. He came from the presbyterate of this Diocese, and brothers how good it is that you are here this morning. Thank you for coming, for the offering of the funeral Mass as the final honoring of the bond of the priesthood that you shared with him. You know that you meant a great deal to Bishop Doran.

Bishop Doran treasured the calling of the priesthood that he received. He was faithful to daily Mass and to the reverent celebration as the Church gives it to us. He treasured the opportunities to offer morning Mass in his final years at Holy Family Parish, and to hear confessions. How better to be conformed to Christ as a priest, the Mass and the forgiveness of sins.

And conformed to Christ – his priesthood imitated also Jesus the teacher. Time and again I have met faithful especially in this area who, years ago, had Father Doran as their teacher. He taught religion at St. Edwards's High School and then he taught at Boylan. He had remarkable

and well-honed gifts of intellect. And those were put to use in the classroom. He was for many that challenging, that unforgettable teacher.

But in his priesthood – it was the faith he wanted to teach. It was the conveyance to our young people especially of the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified and risen. Bishop Doran knew that his faith had been explained to him, had been formed and honed in Catholic schools, and he deeply wished that all our young people could have the blessing of Catholic education that he had. He was a Bishop who supported Catholic education as one of his main priorities.

- 3) There was a third deep love in the life and priesthood of Bishop Doran that benefitted us – and it was another fruit of his calling. It was his love of his native place, of the Diocese of Rockford, and of his home town of Rockford. He was born here. He grew up here, and it marked and formed him – it was in his DNA. He would speak about his dad’s clothing store downtown. Some of his contemporaries mentioned that they grew up with Tommy. The point is that he knew many people and many families throughout the Diocese, and they in turn knew him. He knew the histories and families and places. He knew the personalities. And that is bound to have influenced his priesthood and his service as bishop. He knew the ears that would hear the message of Christ, and knowing them, he knew how to deliver it – how to inspire, encourage and correct – and perhaps in turn to be encouraged and even corrected.

The service of bishop that he bore has many joys. Being with the faithful at confirmations that he administered, the parish anniversaries or the

gathering of his brother priests, all of these gave him a sense of fulfillment. But to be bishop was also at times to carry the cross – at times to make hard decisions. Sometimes to make them alone.

Because he was a Rockfordian – a son of the Diocese- he had a special blessing. In a special way he bore the cross and the service for his own – for the people, the places and the local Church from which he came.

The priest and bishop for whom we pray this morning can be said to be unique – he was a character. Joined to all of his gifts was an expressive sense of humor. He could soften or sharpen his observations with wry and original observations. And, yes, periodically, it got him into trouble.

But his person, his faith and his ministry, were marked by one more trait. Bishop Doran had an ability to foster deep and lasting friendships and relationships. Both locally and wider, among the bishops and at the Vatican where he worked for all those years – he had many true and loyal friends. The presence today of Monsignor Boccafolla, Archbishop Broglio and Monsignor Dempsey, all who knew and worked with him in Rome is a testament to those friendships. He returned that friendship and that loyalty. And as with his staff, the loyalty of friendship, both given and received, was deeply important to him.

By their fruits, you shall know them. We have known Bishop Doran and we've known the fruits of his faith in this Diocese of Rockford for many years. We have our memories of him.

But our Mass, today, is not principally a time to remember. It is to fulfill– in this Year of Mercy that's been proclaimed by Pope Francis – one

of the spiritual works of mercy, and one of our great duties of faith: It is to pray for the dead.

For all of his service for us – all of the prayers he offered – all of the Masses he celebrated – all of the homilies he preached – the sins he forgave – the charity he fostered – the faith that he strengthened – it's our task now – especially in this Mass – to pray for him. We pray for his soul – we pray for the final purification from all faults – we pray for his eternal union with Christ who called him. Perhaps we pray and ask him from before God's throne to intercede for us.

Our reading from the Book of Daniel concluded, “the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead many to justice shall be like the stars forever.”

The memory of Bishop Doran will recall his wisdom and his life-long efforts as priest and bishop to lead us to justice in Christ.

May his soul now shine like the stars forever – before Jesus who long ago said Thomas, come – follow me.

