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## **Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek, third Bishop of Gary, passes at age 83**

MERRILLVILLE— The Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek, third Bishop of the Diocese of Gary, passed from this life peacefully early this morning, Aug. 25, 2022, at the age of 83. On Aug. 19, he celebrated thirty years with the Diocese of Gary.

“Bishop Melczek was a true shepherd who loved his flock in the Diocese of Gary,” remarked Most Rev. Robert J. McClory, the current Bishop of Gary. “He was a tireless servant and a compassionate pastor. We have been blessed tremendously to have such a hopeful and caring leader.”

“Until his last days, Bishop Melczek was still looking forward for new ways to share the love of Jesus in Northwest Indiana,” he added. “We now entrust him to the love of Jesus so that he may be drawn forward into the Lord’s eternal embrace.”

The Rite of Reception of the Body will take place at Holy Angels Cathedral, 640 Tyler St. in Gary, Ind., at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 28, 2022. Visitation will take place from 1:30 - 8 p.m. with Evening Prayer at 5 p.m. and Night Prayer at 7:45 p.m.

On Monday, Aug. 29, 2022, visitation will resume from 8:30 - 9:45 a.m. followed by Morning Prayer. The Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 10:30 a.m. at the Cathedral, followed by a light luncheon. All liturgies are open to the public and will also be livestreamed on the Diocesan YouTube channel (dcgary.org).

Bishop Melczek was born in Detroit, Mich., on Nov. 9, 1938, the eldest of Aloysius and Geraldine Melczek's three children. He studied at St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Mich. and earned a Master of Divinity from St. John Provincial Seminary in Plymouth, Mich. He was ordained to the priesthood by then Archbishop John F. Dearden on June 6, 1964. Upon ordination, he was assigned associate pastor and later co-pastor (1970-1972) of St. Sylvester parish in Warren, Mich. While there, he earned a Master of Education from the University of Detroit—specializing in guidance and counseling—and a teaching certificate from the State of Michigan; he did post-graduate work in liturgy at the University of Notre Dame. He was assigned pastor of St. Christine parish in Detroit in 1972 and served there until 1975 when he was appointed to serve as the assistant vicar for parishes. In 1977, he was appointed priest-secretary and vicar general for the Archdiocese of Detroit with John Cardinal Dearden and later Edmund Cardinal Szoka. He also served on the College of Consultors from 1977-1983.

On Dec. 3, 1982, Pope John Paul II appointed then-Father Melczek as Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit and Titular Bishop of Tragurium. He was consecrated on Jan. 27, 1983 by then-Archbishop Edmund C. Szoka, with Bishops Harold Perry and Arthur Krawczak serving as co-consecrators. As an auxiliary bishop, he served as episcopal vicar of the Northwest Region of the Archdiocese of Detroit, where he had administrative and pastoral responsibilities for 80 parishes, including schools and institutions. In September 1987, he had the privilege of coordinating Pope John Paul II's visit to Detroit.

Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Melczek as apostolic administrator for the Diocese of Gary on Aug. 19, 1992, due to the failing health of Bishop Norbert F. Gaughan. He was appointed coadjutor bishop on Oct. 28, 1995 and officially became the third Bishop of Gary on June 1, 1996, where he served until Pope Francis accepted his resignation on Nov. 24, 2014. Wanting to remain active, Bishop Melczek joyfully accepted his appointment by Bishop Donald J. Hying to serve as administrator of St. Mary of Lake parish in Gary, Ind. where he faithfully served until the time of his death.

As bishop of Gary, Bishop Melczek was deeply devoted to servant leadership and to fully implementing Vatican Council II. Believing that all are baptized as missionary disciples, he initiated a Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program as well as a Permanent Diaconate Program. He asked parishes to implement active parish pastoral councils and commissions as well as RCIA, youth, and adult faith formation programs. Bishop Melczek implemented a Diocesan Pastoral Council, a Clergy Council and four Lay Deanery Councils.

Bishop Melczek was well known for his tireless advocacy of Catholic schools. He founded the Catholic Foundation for Northwest Indiana and established endowment funds for each of the three Catholic high schools to ensure these schools with important future resources.

Many would describe Bishop Melczek's leadership style as collaborative, with a commitment to involve the laity in numerous ways, such as with the Program and Budget Review Committee in which the laity were encouraged to promote stewardship, fiscal responsibility, and social justice.

In 2002, Bishop Melczek began to address the sin of racism in Northwest Indiana as a priority with the release of his first Pastoral Letter, "The Many Faces of Our Church: a Pastoral Letter on Cultural Diversity." In the parish-based facilitated discussions that followed the letter, Catholics came together to examine the gifts of their diverse ethnic and racial cultures to the Church and to society.

The following year, Bishop Melczek wrote another letter, "Created in God's Image: a Pastoral Letter on the Sin of Racism and a Call to Conversion." The letter was followed by parish-based discussions, diocesan-wide listening sessions, and a beautiful diocesan liturgy of atonement. Bishop Melczek co-chaired the Race Relations Council of Northwest Indiana from 2002-2007.

In addition to his shepherding of the faithful and presbyterate, Bishop Melczek served the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for many years. He worked on several committees including *Human Values, Nominations, Diaconate, Marriage and the Family, Agenda, Budget and Finance, Religious Life and Ministry, Social Development and World Peace, International Policy, the Ad Hoc Committee for Central and Eastern Europe, and the Committee on Economic Concerns of the Holy See.*

The bishop further served on the USCCB administrative board and chaired committees on the Diaconate, the Laity, and the Nominations Committee. He was co-chairman of the Race Relations Council of Northwest Indiana (2002-2007), and episcopal liaison to the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (2002-2007) and for more than thirty years as a member of the Joint Committee of Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bishops.

Bishop Melczek was elected to serve on the board of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) from 1996-2002. He represented CRS on trips to the Philippines, Myanmar and Cambodia, Indonesia and East Timor, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo, Angola, and Tanzania. Even upon retirement, Bishop Melczek continued to travel on behalf of Catholic Relief Services to places such as the Philippines and Egypt.

Bishop Melczek is survived by his sisters Sharon Lipinski and Terri (Rob) Philo, three nieces and two nephews. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made through the Catholic Foundation for Northwest Indiana ([catholicfuture.org](http://catholicfuture.org); 219-769-9292, ext. 268; email: [info@catholicfuture.org](mailto:info@catholicfuture.org)) to one or all three of the Catholic high school endowment funds established by Bishop Melczek (Bishop J. Melczek Endowment Fund for Andrean High School; Bishop J. Melczek Endowment Fund for Bishop Noll Institute; Bishop J. Melczek Endowment Fund for Marquette High School).

[Images are available through the communications office and [dcgary.org](http://dcgary.org)]

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*The Diocese of Gary is home to an estimated 170,000 Catholics who are served through 66 parishes in Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke counties. The diocese is home to three high schools and 17 elementary schools.*