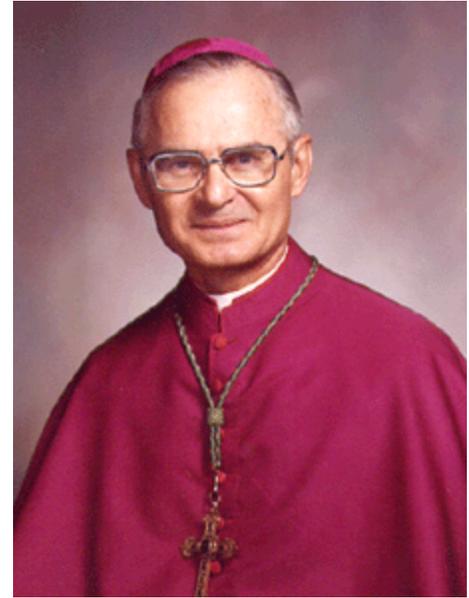
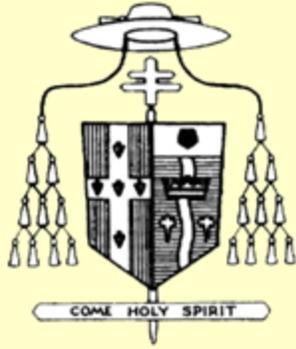


# An Era of Hope 1977-1991 Archbishop Charles A. Salatka



*Archbishop Salatka's years in Oklahoma (1977-1993) were a time of out reach to the immigrants and the poor of the state. Catholic Charities became a larger and stronger organization under him. The first Archdiocesan wide RENEW was held as well as the first multi-cultural festival. He led his flock during some of our darkest days when Father Stanley Rother was murdered in Guatemala.*

Upon his arrival in Oklahoma City, Archbishop Salatka prepared a message that was read throughout the Archdiocese at Sunday Mass. The message said: "After nearly 10 years as shepherd of the Diocese of Marquette, Mich., I have been called by Pope Paul VI to minister among you, the church of Oklahoma City, as your Archbishop.

In this call I discerned the will of the Lord for me.

As I prepare to come to you, I request your prayers so that my ministry among you will give glory to the Father and provide nourishment for you, God's people. I look forward to worshipping with you.

May our pilgrimage as shepherd and sheep of the Church of Jesus Christ be a sign and cause of hope and love to all people of good will."

As a man Archbishop Charles A. Salatka helped carry the burdens of others. But for this he sought no monetary compensation. And what he earned for his tireless efforts was far greater than gold, it was the deep and abiding love and respect of the Catholic people of Oklahoma.

What Oklahoma Catholics may remember most about Archbishop Charles Alexander Salatka was his compassion for people and how he reached out to them, especially in their time of need. And how, even with the hectic schedule of an Archbishop, he made time to listen.

On the 50th anniversary of Archbishop Salatka's Ordination to the Priesthood, Father David Monahan wrote:

Memories of Archbishop Salatka in the minds of many thousands of Catholics in Oklahoma create a mosaic of their good shepherd's life from 1977 to 1992. In that mosaic we see delighted Hispanics as the Archbishop addresses them in Spanish. . . we see him listening carefully to young people and responding to them. . . we see him with tears in his eyes as he travels to Will Rogers Airport to bless the body of Father Stanley Rother, Oklahoma missionary and martyr . . . we see him traveling about the archdiocese promoting RENEW. . . we see him firmly and generously supporting his priests who have severe health problems. . . we see him walking the corridors of hospitals and nursing homes. . . we see him frowning in concentration during long sessions at his desk. . . we see him leading us in the grand celebration of "Many Grains-One Bread". . . we see him. . ."

Born the son of Charles Anthony and Mary (Balun) Salatka on Feb. 26, 1918 in Grand Rapids, Mich., Archbishop Salatka was one of five children. Archbishop Salatka was ordained to the priesthood on Feb. 24, 1945 in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. On March 6, 1962, Father Charles Alexander Salatka was ordained a bishop serving as Auxiliary Bishop of Grand Rapids from 1962-68, the 1st bishop of Lithuanian extraction in U.S. history. On Jan. 10, 1968, Bishop Salatka was appointed Bishop of Marquette and two months later, on March 25, he was installed as bishop there. He served the Diocese of Marquette until Sept. 27, 1977 when he was appointed Archbishop of Oklahoma City. On Dec. 15, 1977 he was installed as Archbishop of Oklahoma City, a position he would hold until his retirement on Jan. 22, 1993.

Archbishop Salatka is remembered for helping to spread that great hope throughout the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. He was a passionate supporter of RENEW and brought the spiritual movement to the Archdiocese in the early 1980s. He embraced the idea for the first Catholic Multi-Cultural Festival that attracted thousands to downtown Oklahoma City in 1992 and spent the entire day greeting and talking with the festival goers. Only two months later he would lead a contingent of black Catholics to New Orleans for the National Black Catholic Congress.

In a move that proved visionary, Archbishop Salatka founded the Office of Hispanic Ministry in the 1970's. He was a child of the depression who never forgot the strength his parents found in their Catholic faith, the memory of which produced in him a strong empathy for Hispanic and Vietnamese immigrants here, whose hopes and troubles resonated deeply with those of his own parents and others in the immigrant community of his childhood. So dedicated to the Hispanic population was the Archbishop, at the age of 68 he devoted himself to learning the language. As soon as he could he was saying Mass in Spanish.

From this concern for the immigrants and the poor Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City became a strong intent under Archbishop Salatka. Many Catholic Charities programs were approved to answer developing needs during Archbishop Salatka's tenure; Migration and Resettlement for Refugees program, Parish Social Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Immigration Assistance Program, St. Joseph Counseling Center, Trinity Gardens and Villa Isenbart.

The most defining characteristic of the Archbishop Salatka was his devotion to the Holy Spirit. He was one of the last surviving bishops of Vatican II and the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit he experienced there marked his ministry more than any other event in his entire life. His Episcopal motto in Marquette was Veni Sancte Spiritus which he rendered in the vernacular as Come Holy Spirit when he came to Oklahoma. Upon his death he requested that his ring he received at the II Vatican Council stay in the Oklahoma City Archdiocese, as it is part of our history. As bishop he cherished the privilege of imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit to others. He ordained 1/3 of the priests and deacons currently (2003) serving the Archdiocese including and confirmed over 20,000 of our youth.

In 1993 Archbishop Salatka retired but chose to stay in Oklahoma with the people he had come to serve and fell in love with. Only the second to serve as Archbishop for the Oklahoma City Archdiocese, the retired Archbishop died peacefully March 17, 2003 at Saint Ann Retirement Center. He was 85.

<http://www.catharchdioceseokc.org/history/Salatka.htm>