

Archbishop Salatka
“This Is Your Life”

by Winnie Spencer

July 21, 1988

February 26, 1918 on a bright sunny morn,
A baby boy to Mr. and Mrs. Salatka was born.
They named him Charles, very fitting I'd say.
They lived on Grand Rapid's West side, U.S.A.

You studied, worked hard, and liked to play
With Father Albert Bernott many a day.
St. Peter and Paul's was your home Parish.
Your schooling and altar boy days, you do cherish.

With two wonderful parents so loving and sharing
You grew up to be very humble, kind, and caring.
God was very pleased with this young man,
He called, "Charles, come with me, I have a great plan."

Being obedient, humble, and a proper young gent,
It was off to St. Joseph's Seminary you went.
After several years of hard work and study we see,
You were off to Washington to earn your bachelor and master degree
In philosophy and theology at the Catholic University, that was the place.
Always turning to God for your strength, guidance and grace.

On February 24, 1945 by the late Bishop Haas you were ordained.
The Diocese of Grand Rapids, a great blessing did gain.
At St. Joseph's Seminary, you served as a professor
helping other young men, as did your predecessors.

1946 you were appointed to Graduate Study in Cannon Law in Rome,
1948 to Secretary of the Chancery and Chaplain of St. John's Orphanage home.

You were assigned Pastor of St. Michael's in June 1950
Plus retain duties in the Chancery Office, wasn't that nifty?

You were not only our Pastor, but worked full time indeed,
At the Chancery Office in Grand Rapids fulfilling their need.

We were well taken care of with daily Mass
It's a heavenly wonder, you didn't run out of gas,

As you flew for Grand Rapids in very high speeds,
Praying the Rosary fervently, while clutching your beads.
In your 12 years at St. Michael's how your duties grew;
Here are some, I remember, just to mention a few:

Appointed Vice Chancellor and Secretary of Diocesan Building Committee 1954

Let's take a moment to remember, as there is really much more.

1957 to Secretary of the Diocesan Lawyers Guild

1959 to Papal Chamberlain, your schedule filled.

You came as a city lad out to the sticks.
Soon to find there were lots of things to be fixed.
Religious barriers built over the years for so long,
You patched and mended and made our community strong.

Many people to care for, spiritual mending to do,
The large number of converts because of you.
The purchase of the land and rectory had to be tended to yet;
Keeping Dennison on the map was a goal you had set.

Your faith in mankind was like the Rock of Gibraltar
As you gathered us all around God's altar.
While delivering your homily, how your keen eyes would wander
Seeking any missing sheep from your flock, then you would ponder

As you greeted us on our way out, you would ask,
"Oh, I missed Sally or Johnny or Mary at Mass
Are they sick? Tell them I missed them!" you would add.
So if you had played hooky, you would feel really bad.

You taught us God's love and followed the Golden Rule
And saw the great need to have our own school.
By pinching the pennies and you going without,
You showed us this dream could come true no doubt.

In the midst of all this, your Chancery work and here,
You were promoted to Monsignor - 1959 was the year.
The festival, the suppers, the fundraisers were many,
We scraped and we pinched and we saved every penny.

Soon the builders moved in and our dream became real;
A new church, school and convent to be built, what a deal.
As the buildings progressed, we were filled with emotion
With mixed joy and sadness we heard of your promotion.

1962 -- you were consecrated, our Auxiliary Bishop as we all heard
You were appointed by our late Pope John the Twenty-third.
God knows what He's doing, this is so true,
But our selfishness told us, we didn't want to lose you.

Yet how could we not be filled with faith and joy,
To see God's plan unfolding in His once little boy.
So we gracefully parted, shedding our tears,
Thanking you for the 12 God loving years.

As Auxiliary Bishop of Grand Rapids your duties were great,
God still had many plans for your future and fate.
October, 1962 as Bishop and Pastor of St. James, you left your home --
You were off to the Second Vatican Council in Rome.

This poem goes on so please don't fret,
1968 you were appointed Bishop of Marquette.
For 9 years you served faithfully asking no one for pity,
1977 Pope Paul VI named you Archbishop of Oklahoma City.

Through the years we've been with you in our thoughts and prayers.
We're so happy you can be here in 1988 to share
Our new church we've waited patiently for 26 years to enter.
We now dedicate to you -- your church! as the Salatka Center.

We realize it's condition now looks a bit rugged and rough
Because we ran out of what they called that "green stuff".
It was an adventure and fun, with a bit of a strife
Trying to put to poetry "This is your life".

Now dear Archbishop Salatka this is no joke,
We're all praying for the day you become our Pope!