
SEPULCRUM
SANCTI PETRI APOSTOLI

Bishop Michael Driscoll celebrates Mass in Rome in this 2012 photo. (CNS/Paul Haring)



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Boise, Idaho — October 25, 2017
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Retired Bishop Michael Driscoll, who headed the Boise Diocese from 1999 to 2014, died of natural causes in Boise Oct. 24. He was 78.

Details about his funeral Mass and burial arrangements were to be announced in the days ahead.

Bishop Peter Christensen, who succeeded Bishop Driscoll in late 2014, recalled his first visit to the diocese. "I soon realized that Bishop Driscoll was a pastoral and compassionate shepherd to the people and his priests by the manner in which he passed the leadership of the diocese on to me," he said in a statement.

"His love for this diocese was evident not only in his words, but also by his pastoral care for all. He was truly a gentle and kind man," Bishop Christensen said in a statement.

Bishop Driscoll presided over the statewide Boise Diocese during 15 years of rapid growth and cultural change for the church in Idaho.

He implemented the appointment of parish life directors in parishes that did not have priests and revived a training program for those wanting to serve as deacons. During Bishop Driscoll's tenure, the number of active deacons increased from 34 to

Bishop Driscoll increased outreach to a growing Hispanic community and recruited priests to Idaho from Mexico and Colombia. He wrote a pastoral letter on immigration reform, "Welcome the Strangers," in 2007 and convened a summit of Hispanic leaders in 2014.

He had a unique relationship with Native American tribes, continuing a long tradition of celebrating a Mass each year at the Cataldo Mission, the oldest building in Idaho.

Dating back to his early days as a priest, Bishop Driscoll became well known for his long association and leadership of Catholic Charities USA, the social justice arm of the church.

A year after being installed as bishop of Boise in 1999, he founded Catholic Charities of Idaho. In its first year, the agency served 101 clients. Today, Catholic Charities serves more than 3,200 annually and operates offices in Boise and Idaho Falls that provide statewide immigration and information and referral services, and adult education and mental health services.

As a shepherd to the priests in the diocese, he brought the "Good Leaders, Good Shepherds" program to Idaho, which provided ongoing education and support for priests, especially those who had become first-time pastors. During his tenure, a retirement center for priests was built in Boise and he expanded priests' pensions based on years of service.

Bishop Driscoll spearheaded a major pastoral plan, calling for renewal in four primary areas: youth and young adults, Christian discipleship, building Christ-centered communities and supporting ordained and consecrated life. One of the outcomes of that plan was the creation of the Office of Religious Education and Catechetical Leadership.

A number of churches were built or renovated during Driscoll's tenure. He also presided over the expansion of the Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise and contributed to the opening of the Spirit Center at St. Gertrude Monastery in Cottonwood.

Michael Patrick Driscoll was born in Los Angeles Aug. 8, 1939. After studies at Our Lady Queen of Angels Seminary in San Fernando, California, and St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, he was ordained a priest of the Los Angeles Archdiocese May

1, 1965, by Cardinal James McIntyre in St. Vibiana Cathedral.

He served in several pastoral assignments in Los Angeles, until 1975, when he was appointed associate director for Catholic Charities in Orange County, California. That same year, he earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

When Orange was erected as its own diocese in 1976, then-Father Driscoll became the first chancellor, Bishop William Johnson named him to the post to help organize the new diocese. Ten years later, Johnson's successor, Bishop Norman McFarland, appointed the priest, now a monsignor, to be vicar for religious communities and vicar for charities.

Advertisement

He was diocesan vicar general when St. John Paul II named him an auxiliary bishop for Orange Dec. 19, 1989, and he retained that post following his episcopal ordination March 6, 1990, in Orange's Holy Family Cathedral.

Nine years later, Driscoll was named by John Paul to be the seventh bishop of Boise. Appointed Jan. 19, 1999, he was installed March 18, 1999, in St. John's Cathedral.

In 2014, upon turning 75, Driscoll submitted his retirement letter to Pope Francis, which the pope accepted. Canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation when they turn 75. Driscoll spent his remaining years in Boise.

Bishop Driscoll is survived by his sister, Kay Nadeau, and nephew, Jeff Nadeau, of Garden Grove, California; a nephew, Rodney Driscoll of Boise; a niece, Danette Drake of Meridian; and two grand-nieces and two grand-nephews.