News



Brazilian Cardinal Serafim Fernandes de Araujo, retired archbishop of Belo Horizonte, died Oct. 8, 2019, in Brazil at the age of 95. He is pictured in an undated photo. (CNS/L'Osservatore Romano)



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Brazilian Cardinal Serafim Fernandes de Araujo, retired archbishop of Belo Horizonte, died Oct. 8 in Brazil at the age of 95.

With dozens of Brazilian bishops at the Vatican for the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, Pope Francis and other synod members offered special prayers that evening for the repose of his soul.

In a message of condolence, Pope Francis drew special attention to Araujo's more than 50 years of service as auxiliary bishop and archbishop of Belo Horizonte. "His missionary passion made love for Jesus Christ and his church grow in the heart of the faithful," the pope said.

The cardinal's death left the College of Cardinals with 224 members, 127 of whom were under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.

Araujo celebrated his 60th anniversary as a bishop in May; as a bishop, he was a member of the Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962 to 1965. And although he was a cardinal for 21 years, he never participated as an elector in a conclave, since he turned 80 eight months before St. John Paul II died.

Born Aug. 13, 1924, in Minas Novas, Brazil, he held degrees in theology and in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1949 and became a bishop in 1959, serving as an auxiliary in Belo Horizonte.

From 1960 to 1981, Araujo was president of the Catholic University of Minas Gerais. He served as coadjutor archbishop of Belo Horizonte for more than three years before becoming head of the archdiocese in 1986.

He served as vice president of the Brazilian bishops' conference, 1991-1995. And in 1992, he was one of three papally appointed co-presidents of the fourth general conference of the Latin American bishops' council in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

When he was made a cardinal by St. John Paul in 1998, he was asked by reporters about the possibility of him becoming pope one day. He replied that of the 123 cardinals then eligible, he was probably No. 123 on the list.

"I am conscious of my importance within the group,'' he said.

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