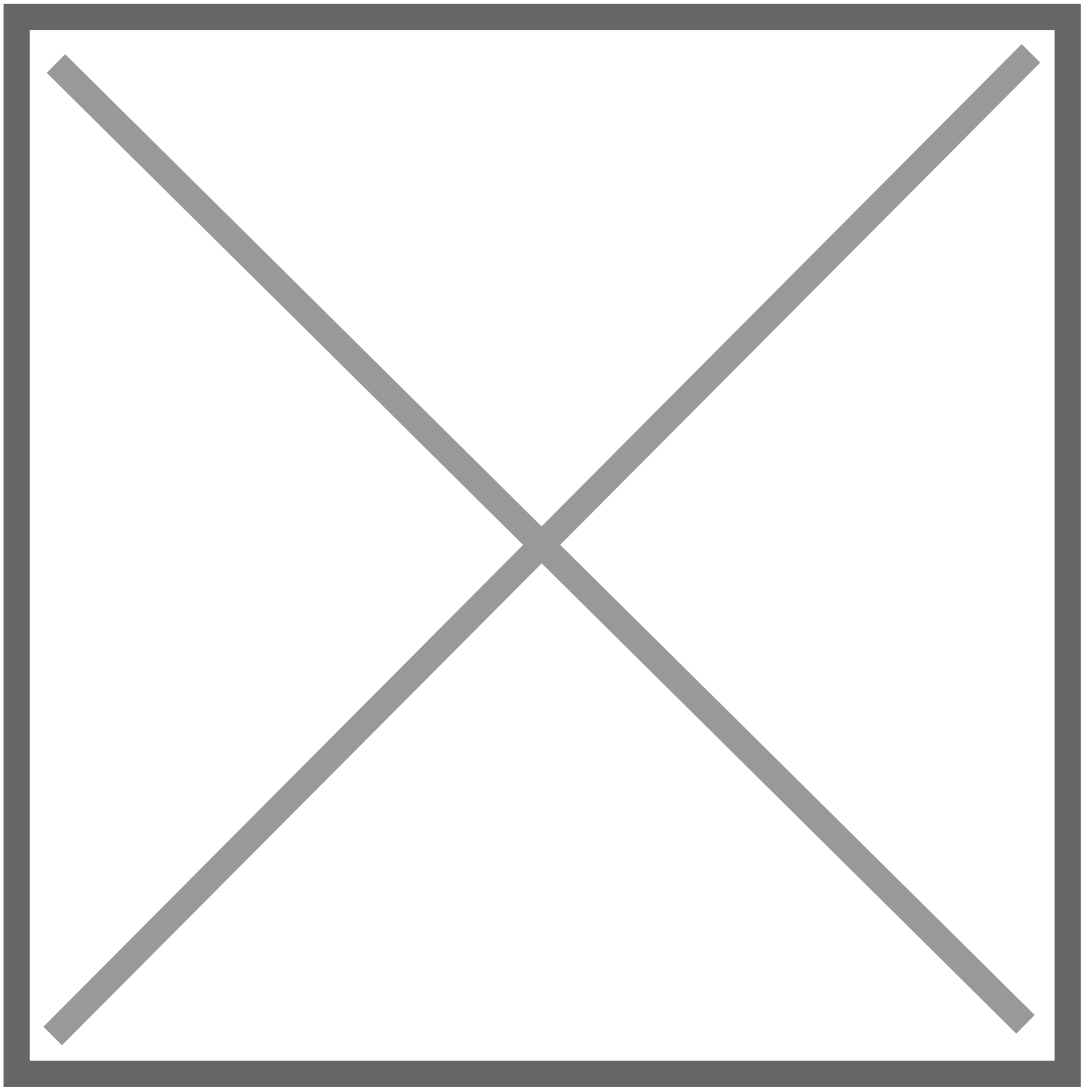
News



Cardinal Sebastian Koto Khoarai of Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho, right, blesses Bishop Joseph Sephamola of Qacha's Nek in 2013. Khoarai died April 17 at the age of 91. (CNS/courtesy CCJP)



by Catholic News Service

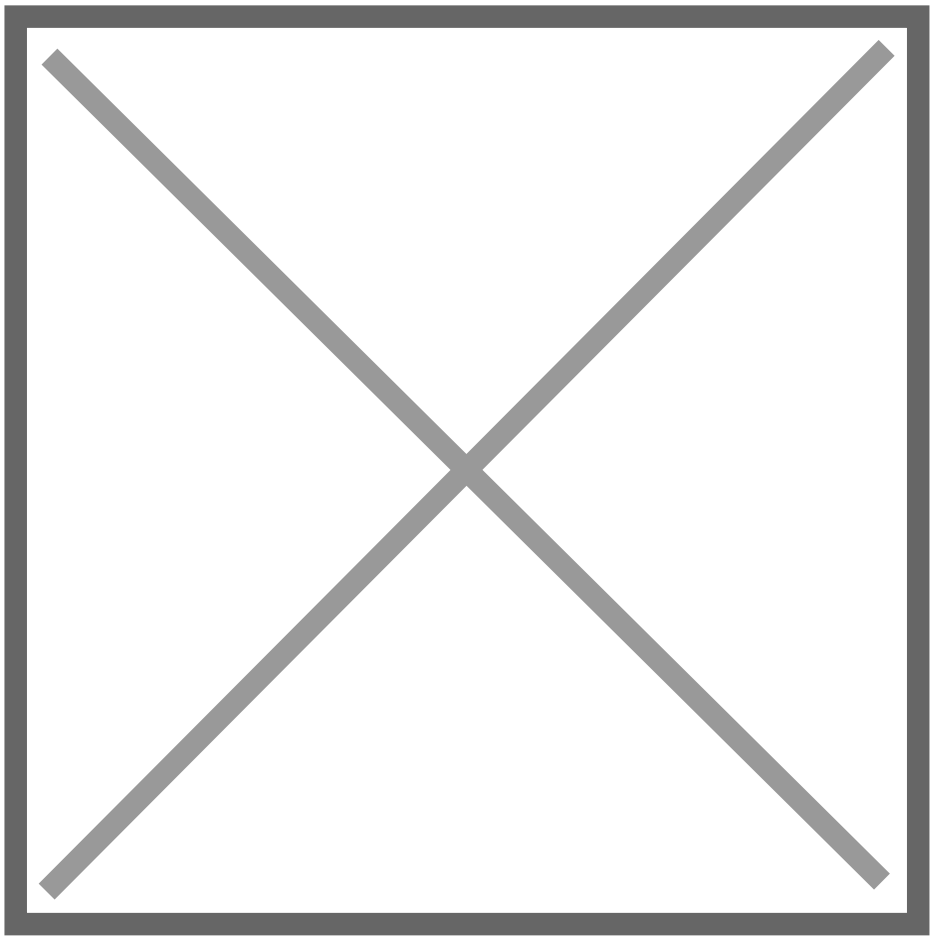
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Cardinal Sebastian Koto Khoarai of Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho, right, blesses Bishop Joseph Sephamola of Qacha's Nek in 2013. Khoarai died April 17 at the age of 91. (CNS/courtesy CCJP)

Cardinal Sebastian Koto Khoarai, the first and only cardinal from Lesotho, died April 17 at the age of 91 in Mazenod, Lesotho.

For almost 40 years, he led the Diocese of Mohale's Hoek, submitting his resignation, as required by canon law, in 2006 when he reached the age of 75, but continuing to serve as apostolic administrator of the diocese until February 2014.

Expressing his condolences to the people of the diocese and to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the order to which the cardinal belonged, Pope Francis particularly praised Khoarai's "long-standing commitment to the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and his dedication to the church's educational apostolate in Lesotho."

Born Sept. 11, 1929, in the Diocese of Leribe, when it was part of the former British colony of Basutoland, now Lesotho, he was baptized a Catholic at the age of 11.

After studying at local seminaries, he entered the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1950. He was ordained to the priesthood Dec. 21, 1956, two days after having baptized his father, according to his Vatican biography.

After holding various positions in seminaries in Lesotho, he was named pastor of the parish in Mount Royal Mission and then superior of the Oblates in Mazenod. He served as the Oblates' provincial as the country won its independence from Britain in 1966.

In 1971, he was named vicar general of the Archdiocese of Maseru and pastor of the cathedral. In November 1977, St. Paul VI named him the first bishop of Mohale's Hoek and he was ordained the following April.

Francis made him a cardinal in 2016 when Khoarai was already 87 and was unable to travel to Rome for the consistory. Instead, celebrations were held in Mohale's Hoek and Lesotho King Letsie III was among those attending.

Khoarai's death leaves the College of Cardinals with 224 members, 126 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave.

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