News



Congolese Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, retired archbishop of Kinshasa, in February 2018 (CNS/Reuters/Robert Carrubba)

by Catholic News Service

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July 12, 2021

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Congolese Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, retired archbishop of Kinshasa, a biblical scholar and an activist for justice and peace, died July 11 near Paris where he had been rushed five days earlier for medical care.

The cardinal, one of the original members of Pope Francis' international Council of Cardinals, was 81.

With the Vatican's blessing, in the 1990s as Zaire was transitioning to becoming the Democratic Republic of Congo, he took an active role in mediating his country's political crisis and trying to guide the nation to a new democratic constitution.

In 1991, he was elected president of the Sovereign National Conference; from 1992 to 1994, he served as president of the High Council of the Republic; and in 1994-1995, he served as speaker of the country's transitional parliament.

The cardinal also had served as president of the Congolese bishops' conference and as co-president of Pax Christi International, the Catholic peace organization.

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Born in Mongobele, he attended the minor seminary of the Inongo Diocese before entering the major seminary at Kabwe. Sent to Rome in 1960, he studied theology at the Pontifical Urban University and was ordained in Rome Dec. 21, 1963. From 1964 to 1970, he studied at Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute, earning a doctorate in biblical sciences.

He was named auxiliary bishop of Inongo in 1980, auxiliary bishop of Kisangani in 1980 and archbishop of Kisangani in 1988. Pope Benedict XVI named him archbishop of Kinshasa in 2007 and a cardinal in 2010.

His death leaves the College of Cardinals with 221 members, 124 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.