

Retired Tulsa bishop remembered for heart for the poor

written by OSV News |



Retired Bishop Edward J. Slattery of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma, who died late Sept. 13 at age 84, is being remembered for his deep faith, his heart for the poor and his faithful service as a priest and bishop.

Bishop Slattery, a Chicago native, was named Tulsa's shepherd in November 1993 by St. John Paul II and retired in 2016. He died at his home in the Tulsa area following "a series of debilitating strokes," Father Gary Kastl, vicar general, said in a statement from the diocese.

His funeral Mass will be celebrated the morning of Sept. 28 at Holy Family Cathedral in Tulsa, followed by burial at Calvary Cemetery. His body will be received at the cathedral Sept. 26 and will lie in repose for public visitation, with time reserved for prayer and song. The morning of Sept. 27, his body will be received at the Benedictines' Clear Creek Monastery for public visitation, then be received at the cathedral again for more hours of public visitation and public prayer.

"Bishop Slattery was a man of deep faith who knew that death would bring him to his Lord," said Bishop David A. Konderla, who succeeded Bishop Slattery as head of the diocese in 2016. "I was blessed to follow in his footsteps in the Diocese and will remember him with fondness and prayer."

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City said in a statement, "For many years I have

appreciated Bishop Slattery as a friend and brother bishop.”

“He welcomed me warmly when I arrived in Oklahoma in 2011 and always encouraged my ministry here,” he said. “I have appreciated the pastoral leadership he provided in the Diocese of Tulsa and nationally through the work of Catholic Extension which he guided before coming to Oklahoma.”

Edward James Slattery was born in Chicago Aug. 11, 1940, to William Edward Slattery and Winifred Margaret Brennan Slattery. Of their seven children, he was the second child and first boy. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents emigrated to the United States from Ireland.

He was attracted to the priesthood at a young age, having been influenced by his family, parish priests and the sacramental life of the Church.

“One night, about 2 in the morning, I woke up ... and I was aware of God’s presence as I had never been before,” the bishop told *Tulsa World*. “The house was absolutely silent. And I’m lying there wide awake in the dark, and I’m beginning to cry a little bit because I’m so happy that God is so good to me. It was a religious experience. I just knew God was present, and he knew me and loved me, and I was safe. And I was feeling overwhelmed with gratitude. No words, just a sense, or a feeling.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree and a master of divinity degree at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill., he was ordained a priest on April 26, 1966, for the Archdiocese of Chicago by the late Cardinal John Patrick Cody.

In 1971, he began a lengthy service with the Chicago-based Catholic Church Extension Society, a funding agency for the American home missions. He was vice president from 1971-1976 and president from 1976-1994.

While working at the Extension Society, Father Slattery in 1973 was appointed associate pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, an inner-city Hispanic parish on Chicago’s South Side. He was pastor there from 1976-1989.

In 1979, Father Slattery first met St. John Paul when the pontiff visited Chicago as part of an U.S. pastoral visit. Late in 1993, the pope appointed him to the Tulsa Diocese. His father learned the news but died before witnessing his son become a bishop in Rome, on Jan. 6, 1994. He was one of 13 men the pope ordained as bishops. Among those present for his ordination was his mother.

Bishop Slattery was installed as the third bishop of the Diocese of Tulsa at Holy Family Cathedral Jan. 12, 1994.

He is survived by four sisters and one brother. He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister Mary E. Mathewson-Michael.