



FUNERAL HOMILY
MOST REVEREND EDWARD P. CULLEN
19 May 2023
Cathedral of Saint Catharine of Siena
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Praised be Jesus Christ!

As we commend the soul of Bishop Edward Peter Cullen, Third Bishop of Allentown, to Almighty God, we give thanks to Him for allowing us to be the recipients of Bishop Cullen's life, work, and vocation. On May 19, 1962, the young Deacon, Edward Cullen, prostrated before the altar in the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. By God's Providence, this very day, May 19th 61 years later, and 61 miles away from that altar, he lays before this altar in this Cathedral of Saint Catharine of Siena where he faithfully presided as Bishop for eleven years. We are consoled and uplifted in Christian hope by the words of the Book of Revelation that were just read, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...let them find rest from their labors."

I am pleased to share the following message and blessing from our Holy Father Pope Francis, which I received earlier this week from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State:

"I am saddened to learn of the death of Bishop Emeritus Edward P. Cullen. His Holiness Pope Francis sends heartfelt condolences to you, the clergy, religious, and lay faithful of the Diocese. In commending the late Bishop's soul to the love and mercy of Christ the Good Shepherd, His Holiness joins you in giving thanks for Bishop Cullen's years of ministry to the Church in Allentown, marked by zeal for the renewal of the Diocese in a spirit of synodality and by his care for the poor and most vulnerable. To those gathered for the Mass of Christian Burial and to all who mourn Bishop Cullen's loss in the sure hope of the Resurrection, the Holy Father cordially imparts his blessing as a pledge of peace and consolation in the Lord."

Signed,
Pietro Card. Parolin
Secretary of State

We are honored, and I wish to thank His Excellency, Archbishop Nelson Perez, Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia, who is celebrating the Funeral Mass this morning. In addition, I express our gratitude to my brother Bishops who honor us by their presence:

- Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop Emeritus of Louisville, Kentucky and native son of the Diocese of Allentown.
- Archbishop William Skurla, Metropolitan of the Byzantine Ruthenian Metropolitan Church and Archeparch of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.
- Bishop Ronald Gainer, Bishop Emeritus and Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Harrisburg, also a native son of the Diocese of Allentown
- Bishop Larry Kulick, Bishop of Greensburg
- Bishop Lawrence Brandt, Bishop Emeritus of Greensburg
- Bishop Michael Burbidge, Bishop of Arlington, Virginia
- Bishop Timothy Senior, Bishop-Designate of Harrisburg
- Bishop John McIntyre, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia
- Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia

I also thank Bishop John Barres, Fourth Bishop of Allentown, who sends his profound regrets on not being able to attend today's funeral, but who has written a beautiful tribute to Bishop Cullen.

In particular, we express our closeness to Mr. John Cullen, remaining sibling of Bishop Cullen, Father Edward Brady, priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and nephew of Bishop Cullen as well as Father James Brady, priest of the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, who is also a nephew of Bishop Cullen as well as Bishop Cullen's many nieces, nephews, and dear friends from among the Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. We

also pay tribute to Edward and Julia Cullen, Bishop Cullen's parents, who provided an Irish Catholic home that encouraged and supported vocations to the Priesthood and to the Married Life.

I gratefully acknowledge the presence of numerous Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Religious, Seminarians, Permanent Deacon Candidates, school students, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Allentown, and on their behalf, I extend to you, John, family, and friends, our sympathy and prayers at Bishop Cullen's passing, and we thank you for nurturing and sustaining his vocation through 61 years of Priesthood, 29 of them as a Bishop.

We could easily and rightly reflect on Bishop Cullen's abilities as a pastor, administrator, organizer, social worker, and Diocesan Bishop. In fact, in these last days, much has been written and shared about these human gifts that he possessed. He served the Church as a Bishop during a very difficult time, and he left the Diocese of Allentown a more vibrant local church at the time of his retirement in 2009.

The Funeral Liturgy, however, urges us to speak about the deceased at any funeral, not by giving a homily that is a eulogy, but rather by reflecting on the Christian virtues of the person that can encourage us in our own pilgrimage toward Eternal Life. I am honored to attempt to offer such a reflection of this friend who chose as his episcopal motto *Christ, Church, Compassion*.

Above all, Bishop Cullen was spiritually unafraid. When I visited him Sunday, his next-to-last day on earth, he told me, "Al, I received the Sacraments of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Eucharist. The doctor could come in here and tell me I'm dying tonight, and I wouldn't be frightened." Like Saint Paul, he believed nothing could "separate us from the love of God." Bishop Cullen wrote on Ash Wednesday, 2009, "When we find ourselves in harmony with the will of the Father, we will also find ourselves without any anxiety." He would often tell me what a gift it was to have his retirement years to deepen his life of prayer because it made him unafraid of any human criticisms or physical illness.

He was spiritually in love with the Holy Trinity. He devoted a great deal of his prayer, conversations, and writing to unpacking the meaning of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in our lives. He meditated on the image of the Father providing "merciful forgiveness;" the Son providing "selfless sacrifice;" and the Holy Spirit providing "divine grace." He wrote on Corpus

Christi 2022 that "... (the Blessed Trinity) showers upon us forgiveness, sacrifice and grace as the means of nourishing and strengthening our spiritual life."

Bishop Cullen modeled for us a great love for the Holy Eucharist - Jesus truly present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – by his unwavering belief in Our Lord's words, "Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." As a spiritual consequence of this belief, he had a gentle love for the Blessed Mother. Like Pope Saint John Paul II, he believed that "Mary is present, with the Church and as Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist." (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* #57)

In death, there are so many things that can be said about the life and spiritual legacy of Bishop Cullen. We each will have our own memories of private moments when he offered advice and insights with the utmost charity. He looked to the Holy Spirit for guidance in his life and for those who came to him seeking counsel. None of us will ever know all the lives he touched of those who came to him quietly as a spiritual father, especially in his retirement years.

On All Saints' Day 2012, our brother Edward wrote words that make a fitting epitaph to his long life as a disciple of the Truth: "There is nothing more exciting, more liberating, more comforting and more strengthening than being alive in the life of the Holy Spirit."

As we bid farewell to this faithful servant and Successor to the Apostles, we thank God for enriching our lives with his love for **Christ**, his fidelity to the **Church**, and his ministry of **Compassion**.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord,
And let Perpetual Light shine upon him.

May he rest in peace.

May his soul and the souls of all the Faithful Departed,
Through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.