

BISHOP ALERDING
OF FORT WAYNE
DIES OF INJURIES

24-2022

UNABLE BECAUSE OF ADVANCED AGE TO WITHSTAND SHOCK OF
AUTO CRASH - VETERAN MEMBER
OF AMERICAN EPISCOPATE
(BY N.C.W.C. NEWS SERVICE).

Fort Wayne, Ind., Dec. 8.--The Rt. Rev. Herman Joseph Alerding, Bishop of Fort Wayne, one of the oldest members of the American Hierarchy in point of years' service in the episcopate, died here Saturday afternoon as a result of an automobile accident Thanksgiving Day. He was seventy-nine years old.

Bishop Alerding's automobile was struck November 27 by a street car as it rounded a dangerous corner where the view of the driver was obstructed. The automobile was overturned, pinioning all five of its occupants beneath it. Bishop Alerding suffered three fractured ribs, bruises and a severe nervous shock, made more serious because he had been in poor health for two years. All of the four other occupants of the machine also were injured, and three are still in the hospital.

With immediate hospital attention it was at first reported that Bishop Alerding would recover, although concern was felt because of his advanced age. He seemed to rally gradually from the shock, but great weakness was evident, and after a week's courageous fight, his strength began to wane. Wednesday afternoon the Last Sacraments were administered, and hope for his recovery was virtually abandoned. At that time he was able to recognize those in the room only at intervals. His strength gradually left him until the end Saturday afternoon.

ONE OF OLDEST BISHOPS.

Bishop Alerding's twenty-four years as a member of the Hierarchy made him one of the most venerable of that group of rulers of the Church in America. Only nine ordinaries in the country could boast a longer service in the episcopate. In addition, his early priestly service was in the West, where the young priest had almost heartbreaking conditions with which to cope in the rude, pioneer days.

Bishop Alerding was born in Ibbenbueren, Diocese of Munster, Germany, April 13, 1845. In his infancy the family migrated to America, and he received his early education in the parish school at Newport, Ky.. Later he attended the diocesan college at Vincennes, Indiana; St. Thomas Preparatory Seminary, Bardstown, Ky., and St. Meinrad's Seminary, in Indiana. He was ordained September 22, 1868, and received his first assignment as assistant pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Terre Haute, Ind., where he served for three years.

It was in his next assignment, as pastor at Cambridge City, Indiana that he received his first test. Here he found himself in charge of five mission churches, in addition to his regular parish, all widely distant from each other and with parishioners scattered over a large area. To the difficult pioneer task that confronted him at this post, the young priest gave three years of unselfish and arduous devotion. One year, when there was much sickness and demands upon him were urgent, he went for four weeks without going to bed, snatching what sleep he could as he rode about to visit his flock and rested briefly between calls.

JUBILEE IN 1893.

In 1874, he was transferred to Indianapolis, where he became pastor and virtually the organizer of St. Joseph's parish. Here he labored for twenty-six years of his long ministry. For one year he was procurator of the Seminary and pastor for the congregation. Then, when the Seminary was abandoned, he took up the problems of building for his church. He erected a new St. Joseph's, then a parochial residence, and then built St. Joseph's Academy.

Deeply loved by the flock to whom he had ministered so long, Father Alerding was the center of a great dual celebration in 1893 when he observed his sacerdotal jubilee at the same time the parish observed its silver jubilee.

The letter of appointment as Bishop of Fort Wayne was received by Father Alerding September 27, 1900, and his consecration took place two months later, November 30, 1900.

DIOCESE HAS THRIVED.

Under Bishop Alerding's administration, the Diocese of Fort Wayne thrived, until today it boasts 839 priests, 175 churches and a Catholic population of 161,402. Its ordinary has come to be revered in an almost personal manner by his increased flock, in the twenty-four years he has cared for it.

With a bent toward history, Bishop Alerding is the author of several works concerning the early religious history of the part of the country in which he ministered. Among them are "The Diocese of Vincennes", "The Diocese of Fort Wayne", and "Plymouth Rock and Maryland."

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