

December 28, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

***Now he Belongs to the Ages***

Fifteen years ago, in 2012, Bishop William G. Curlin, retired as Bishop of Charlotte. Actually, Rome accepted his resignation which had to be submitted upon reaching the age of seventy-five. Bishop Curlin was Bishop of Charlotte for eight years (1994 – 2002).

For the last fifteen years of his life Bishop's home was in the Southpark area in a neighborhood called Beverly Woods East. He lived in a home that was provided by dear friends who loved and admired the Bishop very much. There he lived and prayed making daily visits to comfort the sick and the dying in the Charlotte area.

In his home, close to where he sat every day, was a famous black and white picture of Abraham Lincoln. The original was taken by photographer, Alexander Gardner, on November 8, 1863 just weeks before Lincoln would deliver his famous Gettysburg Address.

When Lincoln died, Edwin W. Stanton said, "There lies the most perfect ruler of men the world has ever seen. Now he belongs to the ages." All would cherish his memory. Those who knew him would consider themselves blessed to know such a man. The same is equally true of Bishop William G. Curlin.

When Bishop Curlin was in the emergency room the night of December 16<sup>th</sup>, he was surrounded by friends who were concerned and worried. Bishop told us several times, "I'm not complaining. I'm not complaining." Bishop Curlin was now 90 years old. He had recently celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on May 25<sup>th</sup>. He had dedicated his life to helping the poor, the sick and the dying.

Bishop Curlin came to Charlotte in 1994. He was installed as the third Bishop of Charlotte at St. Gabriel's Catholic Church. It will be in that same church on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 that the faithful will gather to say their goodbyes at his Mass of Christian Burial.

As an auxiliary bishop for the Washington Archdiocese, he was told once by a demanding cardinal that he would never be an ordinary. The Church up north is different. The faithful may have a cardinal or an archbishop, but the levels of bureaucracy are so many that only a few ever get to know them personally. In the South, the priests and the people have many opportunities to know their shepherds on a personal level and to love them.

When Bishop Curlin heard that Pope John Paul II had appointed him a bishop, he called Mother Teresa and told her, "Mother, its Charlotte!" We were thrilled to have him. This was what the Diocese of Charlotte needed.

Bishop Curlin spoke about Mother Teresa often in his homilies. His love for the poor and the dying is what made the two of them close friends. He encouraged us to follow her example by helping others. Bishop Curlin also spoke out against the evil of abortion in our country encouraging us to respect all life from conception until natural death.

At St. Patrick's Cathedral, Bishop Curlin came just about every week to celebrate the 11 o'clock Mass on Sunday. People loved him. He celebrated the Midnight Mass on Christmas and another Mass on Christmas Day. He also began the tradition of celebrating the Midnight Mass on New Year's Eve telling us that it began years ago when he was a priest serving in a poor parish in Washington, D.C. He would go into the church to pray at Midnight and turn on all the Christmas lights. Then the poor people of the neighborhood would see the lights and come in and join him. What better way to begin the New Year than at Mass.

Bishop Curlin had a great heart. When I told him about families that had lost a mother or a father before Christmas, he told me that he wanted to take the children out so that they could buy whatever toys they wanted. He even took two brothers to a fancy clothing store in the mall so that they could buy a coat for their mother. All of this was on his dime. Yesterday, a family member told me the little boy who lost his mother years ago and is in college today still has the gift that Bishop Curlin bought him for Christmas.

Yes, now he belongs to the ages. Bishop Curlin lived and died a holy man. We will remember him forever thanking God that we had the opportunity to know such a man.

Father Paul Q. Gary