

Memorial Mass for Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen

St. Helena Cathedral

Bishop George Leo Thomas

July 27, 2018

In late April, just days before my departure to the Diocese of Las Vegas, I had a tender and tearful visit with Archbishop Hunthausen at his residence just east of Helena.

He was in rare form that day—lucid and interactive, and the conversation was lively, with intermittent bouts of laughter and melancholy. Each of us knew in our hearts that this was likely to be the last time we would be together this side of the grave.

As I took leave of the Archbishop's room he called me back one more time. "Please promise you'll come back to Helena to celebrate my Memorial Mass. It would mean the world to me." I'm here today to make good on that promise. Besides that, "Who could say no to someone who holds such a treasured place in all of our hearts for decades on end?"

Raymond G. Hunthausen was born in Anaconda on August, 21, 1921, the oldest of seven siblings--the son of a hardworking grocer and a devoutly Catholic mother, Edna Tuchscherer.

From their home in Anaconda, Montana, Tony Hunthausen and his wife Edna taught their children foundational lessons that have forever impacted the lives of their children. Those life lessons, born in a humble household, have continued to produce generations of natural leaders for both Church and community.

Tony and Edna gave their sometimes obdurate children the capacity for hard work and an appreciation for team effort. They created enduring family cohesion and forged unbreakable bonds between the siblings and extended family, bonds that have stood the test of time.

By example more than word, Tony and Edna quietly taught their children to cherish their Catholic Faith which served as the heartbeat of the Hunthausen household. They gave their children a special sensitivity toward the underdog, an uncommon commitment to the poor and underserved, and a deep appreciation of education as a passport to a better life.

I think that the Hunthausen family would agree that these have been gifts that have kept on giving.

As a young student, Raymond G. displayed both academic and athletic prowess, an all-American boy who entered Carroll College with no particular aspiration to the priesthood or religious life. A certain professor of mathematics, the indomitable future

Bishop of Spokane, Father Bernard Topel, played a pivotal role in Ray Hunthausen's formation and spiritual transformation.

Topel's mentorship served as a North Star throughout Hunthausen's life, and became especially valuable when the waters grew turbulent and the way forward was enshrouded by fog.

On the occasion of his golden jubilee as a priest, Archbishop Hunthausen told a newspaper reporter, "I was convinced, of course, that the priesthood was wonderful and that we needed priests. Somebody ought to be a priest, I thought, but I'm not sure I ought to be the one."

Father Topel had a different idea. Under his tutelage, Raymond prepared himself for the seminary, but candidly admitted, "I wasn't sure how long I might stay." Fr. Topel had a different idea there too.

Raymond entered St. Edward's Seminary in the fall of 1943, as the United States was in the throes of World War II.

As he prepared for the sub-diaconate, a pivotal stage in the life of any seminarian, Ray received the providential sign he needed to advance to priesthood with confidence. It was a handwritten letter from his father that served as a seal of approval, and dispelled any lingering doubts he may have harbored. His father wrote, "My Adam's apple has jumped with delight as I reflect on the direction you are moving." "I had that letter framed and hung it in my bedroom," he told me with a smile.

As a newly ordained priest, Father Hunthausen was assigned to teach chemistry and eventually to coach football at his beloved alma mater, Carroll College.

In no short order, the administration and teaching staff quickly recognized the young priest's natural gift for leadership and his capacity for greater responsibility. In 1953, he secured a Master's of Science degree from Notre Dame University.

Over the next decade, a series of unanticipated and unwelcomed events slipped into his life and thrust him out of his natural comfort zone.

In 1955, the sudden death of Carroll's beloved Edward "Doc" Neumann, chair of the Chemistry Department, launched the inexperienced young priest into the role of department chair, an appointment he relished, though it was short lived.

Two years later, the highly regarded President of Carroll College, Msgr. Vincent Cavanaugh died following routine surgery in Denver, Colorado. Again, the Bishop of Helena turned to Raymond G. Hunthausen, who, at age 35, was appointed the seventh president of Carroll College.

Bishop Gilmour told the college community that his decision to appoint Hunthausen as president was due in no small measure to this priest's "religious and academic training, as well as his popularity, which made him ideally suited to carry on the mission of the college."

The pattern continued in Hunthausen's life, when Bishop Joseph Michael Gilmore himself was unexpectedly called home to God. On July 8, 1962, Msgr. Raymond G. Hunthausen was appointed by Pope John XXIII as the sixth Bishop of Helena. He chose as his episcopal motto, "Thy will be done."

Hunthausen's deep and abiding friendship with Spokane Bishop Bernard Topel continued to be a lodestar for the new Bishop as he endeavored to navigate through the complex challenges of diocesan leadership.

In a touching letter to Bishop Hunthausen in 1962, Bishop Topel wrote, "*Dear Dutch, I hope that you are keeping your own quest of holiness way out in front. I hope that your problems are not dominating you, instead you are dominating them. Above all, they must not crowd out your spiritual program and your objectives and desires in the slightest. It is for certain, that if you keep proper spiritual perspective, God will use you for great things. Otherwise, not. Let us pray for one another. Bishop Topel.*"

Within a matter of months the following his episcopal ordination, the newly ordained Bishop was summoned to Rome to join bishops from across the globe for the convening of the Second Vatican Council.

He was accompanied by his friend Bishop Topel, along with his longtime colleague and companion, Sylvester Treinen of Boise, Idaho, who himself had been ordained to the episcopacy just one month before Bishop Hunthausen.

Bishop Hunthausen was only 41 years old when the Council was inaugurated by John XXIII on October 11, 1962. He sheepishly admitted that he was frequently mistaken as a driver by the other, more senior prelates.

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council irrevocably influenced Hunthausen's life and ministry for the next twenty-nine years of his episcopal leadership.

He embraced and embodied the Council's vision, both in Helena and Seattle, ensuring that John's spirit of *aggiornamento* came to life in the lives of the priests and laity alike.

Historian John O'Malley posited that the Church Fathers introduced a new style for exercising authority in the church: "a change from a more authoritarian and unidirectional style to a more reciprocal and responsive model." (O'Malley, 11).

Hunthausen was deeply committed to the Council's vision of collegiality and collaboration, of dialogue and partnership, as he radically transformed the juridical and legislative processes of the church into models of shared responsibility.

He convened the Helena Diocese's first Presbyteral, Pastoral and Finance Councils, and created a wide swath of collegial bodies comprised of both women and men deputed to assist him as he guided the church through the complexities and vagaries of the day.

Following the Council's emphasis on liturgical renewal, he assembled an active Liturgical Commission and, in the Archdiocese of Seattle, established a full-time Office of Worship, emphasizing the baptismal dignity of all the faithful, and punctuating the value of "full, active, conscious participation" of the faithful in the liturgy.

Among the greatest legacies given to us by Raymond G. Hunthausen was his deep commitment social justice and his radical commitment to the poor.

On a personal note, I often witnessed him slip a \$20 bill into the hands of a beggar as he walked the busy streets surrounding St. James Cathedral.

In Seattle, a developmentally disabled man named George Kotalaris befriended the Archbishop, and assisted in ways that were mostly hidden from view. George was nobody's fool, and knew a good thing when he found it. George knew he had found his own personal ATM machine!

As George's mental health grew more tenuous, and his life and apartment became more and more unkempt, George came to the Archbishop one day with eviction papers in hand. In is quiet and unassuming way, the Archbishop organized a work party and proceeded to clean George's apartment.

While the Archbishop was scrubbing the toilet in George's bathroom, George placed a phone call to the local Seattle newspaper. He said to the reporter, "Guess who's cleaning my toilet!" Within a matter of moments, the newspaper picked up on the story, replete with pictures, making the story and the Archbishop the talk of the town.

In the heady days following the Council, the Archbishop founded the Helena Diocese's Mission in Guatemala, which has been a lifeline for thousands of Guatemalan residents, providing them with education, medical care, and spiritual and sacramental presence since the early 1960s. The mission continues today as one of the Archbishop's most enduring and treasured legacies.

In Seattle, the he transformed Catholic Community Services Seattle into the premier provider of Catholic social services for the underserved and the immigrant, with special attention to men and women struggling with homelessness, mental illness, addictive disorders, illiteracy and generational poverty. Former Washington Gov. Gary Locke described Catholic Community Services as "the conscience of Washington State."

How often I heard the Archbishop repeat his mantra that "redemption comes through the struggle." To be sure, he faced struggles and difficulties that would test the mettle of any priest or bishop.

In the 1970's, shortly after his transfer to the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Archbishop became increasingly alarmed over the proliferation of nuclear arms and immanent capacity for humankind to destroy itself through weapons of mass destruction. "What are we doing to the children?" he would frequently and painfully ask. It was not a rhetorical question.

In his quest to "read the signs of the times" and respond to the mandates of the Gospel, the Archbishop made decisions that were undeniably courageous and personally sacrificial. But those who knew him well knew he had a steel backbone, uncompromising tenacity, and a dogged willingness to pay any price to follow the dictates of his conscience.

In a public address dated 1982, he characterized the Trident nuclear base at Bangor as "the Auschwitz the Northwest." In short order, he was launched into the front pages of the local and national newspapers. Reserved and retiring by nature, he was surprisingly undaunted by negative press and unintimidated by organized detraction, choosing instead to follow the dictates of his conscience in the midst of a swirling maelstrom. August of that same year raised the ante even more as he joined an anti-war march as a protester at the Trident Nuclear Submarine Base.

Hunthausen was deeply influenced by his friendship with pacifists Jim and Shelley Douglas, opting to withhold half of his federal income tax as a personal protest against the arms buildup. That decision was publicly criticized in certain portions of the highly militarized Pacific Northwest, and a key element in the emerging cause celebre.

It was during that same era that the Archbishop also came under scrutiny by the Vatican, which initiated its own investigation into his administration for what they characterized as "weak doctrinal leadership."

The confluence of the nuclear arms protest, coupled with a formal Vatican inquiry, represented the perfect storm in the life of the Archbishop.

The Vatican's decision to assign an auxiliary bishop with special faculties over the Archbishop in key areas of his ministry emboldened the Archbishop's detractors, enraged his supporters, and polarized an already deeply-divided Archdiocese. The model was concluded in less than eighteen months.

The appointment of a coadjutor Archbishop with right of succession was proposed as a more palatable solution to bring much healing into a seriously divided Archdiocese.

I am of the opinion mind that this new model quietly continued the hurt and humiliation he has already endured, though both he and Archbishop Murphy skillfully presented a *bella figura* on the awkward arrangement in every public forum.

To their credit, they systematically assessed and addressed the various doctrinal and disciplinary issues cited by the Vatican. They put forth their best effort to normalize life in the Archdiocese. But in the nearly five years they were together, the shared governance model took its toll on the physical and mental health of both bishops.

During those difficult days, the words of Archbishop's mentor echoed in his heart:

"Dear son in Christ," wrote Bishop Topel, "You must always remember God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Be sure you keep that conviction. Keep telling God you must have humility or you will profit nothing. Tell God that as Bishop you must have it so that you can give the example you should and obtain the grace for your people. This attitude, plus prayer, will most certainly obtain the super abundance of grace you need."

Archbishop Hunthausen resigned from public office five years before the appointed time, a painful decision he made *pro bono ecclesiae*. The decision followed a period of prayerful discernment, intense internal struggle and physical duress.

As I reflect back on the Archbishop's long and lively tenure as the priest and bishop I have known since the day he confirmed me as a junior high boy in this Cathedral, I leave you with many valuable life lessons we have learned during his twenty-nine years of service as bishop and Archbishop. You may add your own.

He taught us to keep the eyes of our heart ever fixed on Christ, and maintain an active life of prayer and devoted companionship with the Risen Lord.

He taught us to never to abandon the poor or forsake the cause of justice. And while providing for the immediate needs of the poor, I would hear him quickly add, "Do not fail to address the underlying causes of poverty that keep the human family shackled in suffering for generations on end."

Never give up on the Church, or fail to remember that ultimately the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit and rests on the shoulders of the Apostles.

Avoid bitterness, resentment and cynicism at all cost, and never get in the way of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in spite of our best efforts or human foibles.

Cherish family, and build strong bonds of friendship to carry you through good times and bad.

Cherish the children, and fill their hearts with love, laughter, and love of the Lord.

Pray and work untiringly for peace so that our children and our children's children can live in security and peace.

Be guided by the words of Saint Paul when he wrote, "Remember that the Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

make your request known to God. Then the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.”

Now that the Archbishop’s earthly pilgrimage has come to an end, we commend him lovingly to the Risen Lord. We ask the Lord to bless his heart with the same peace for which he poured out his life, a peace that is beyond all human understanding, a peace that flows from the very heart and life of our Risen Savior.

Rest in peace, dear Dutch, dear friend, until we all together again, and stand in the loving presence of Jesus, who is ever in our midst, “as one who serves.”