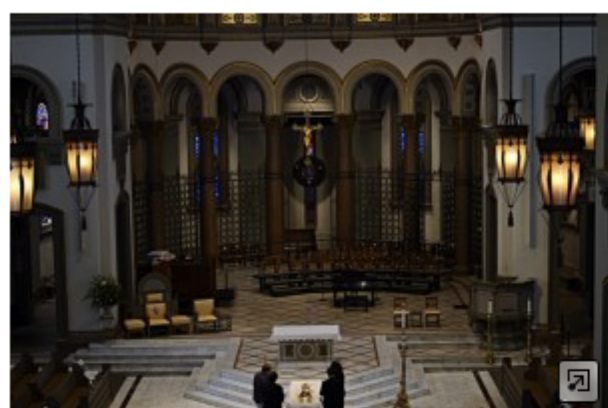


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Mourners at Catholic church remember Bishop Sullivan

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1 OF 7 PHOTOS: Visitors came to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Richmond to pay their respects to Bishop Walter Sullivan before an interfaith prayer service on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. (Amanda Lucier | The Virginian-Pilot)

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By [Jeff Sheler](#)
The Virginian-Pilot
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RICHMOND

Bishop Walter F. Sullivan was remembered Tuesday as "a gentle shepherd" who reached far beyond his own flock to bring peace and healing to his community and the world.

Hundreds of mourners gathered in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart to pay their respects and offer prayers during an ecumenical memorial service for the 84-year-old retired prelate who died Dec. 10 of liver cancer.

"He marched to a different drummer, and we were blessed to have joined him in that march," the Rev. Canon J. Fletcher Lowe, an Episcopal priest who worked with Sullivan on social causes in Richmond and elsewhere, said during a eulogy.

"The words of the prophet Micah describe exactly who Walter was: to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God," Lowe said.

Neil November, a Jewish philanthropist, lauded Sullivan for his work with the Jewish community and people of other faiths during his 29 years as head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

"Rarely does one have the privilege of knowing a man like Walter Sullivan," November said. "He loved everyone and hoped everyone loved him."

A funeral Mass is set for 10:30 a.m. today in the 100-year-old cathedral where Sullivan presided as pastor until he retired in 2003. He will be buried alongside other bishops in the cathedral's crypt.

Throughout the afternoon a steady stream of mourners filed past the open mahogany casket lying in front of the marble altar where Sullivan, dressed in white vestments, lay with his hands resting on a Bible.

Some who stopped dabbed their eyes or reached

in to touch him.

Meanwhile, groups of priests, deacons and seminarians took turns flanking the casket and offering prayers in what was to be an all-night vigil leading up to the funeral Mass.

Afterward, some stopped to share personal remembrances.

Jamie Hickman, a first-year seminarian at Theological College in Washington, D.C., recalled Sullivan's ministry to young people in the diocese, and said it influenced his decision to prepare for the priesthood.

"He was very much a witness for peace and for love," Hickman said. He noted Sullivan's national reputation as a peace advocate as longtime head of the national Catholic peace group Pax Christi.

"That had a major influence on me," Hickman said.

Jay Ipson, a Holocaust survivor and co-founder of the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond, said Sullivan had a special place in his heart for Jewish people.

"He came to me and said he wanted to help when we started the museum," Ipson said. "He gave from his own funds, not church funds, and we became personal friends."

He noted that Sullivan also installed a sculpture, "Rachel Weeping for Her Children," in 1987 in a tribute to Holocaust survivors.

"He united the community," Ipson said. "He had such a demeanor you couldn't help but love him."

Two Franciscan nuns from Nigeria quietly waited in line to pay respects and afterward described how Sullivan had helped them to begin their ministry in Virginia.

"We wanted to be part of the diocese and work with the poor," said Sister Everline, who lives in Virginia Beach. "He was very supportive."

"He was just a kind and gentle man," added Sister Perpetua.

"He was a gentle shepherd who ministered to all, regardless of who they were or where they came from," said Paula Kupstas of Richmond. "The word 'catholic' means including all, and he really did that. He reached out to everyone."

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