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Rt. Rev. L. R. Morrow, sdb, dd.

(24-12-1892—31-8-1987)



SMILING BISHOP MORROW

"The Smiling Bishop" whom Pope Pius XII ordained Bishop of Krishnagar forty-eight years ago went to his eternal reward on Monday morning, 31st August, at 9.35 a.m., at the age of 94. Since his retirement from the administration of his diocese in 1969, he has been resident at the motherhouse of his Sisters of Mary Immaculate, whose congregation he founded on 12th December, 1948.

Bishop Louis LaRavoire Morrow was born of an ecumenical marriage on 24th December, 1892, at Weatherford, Texas, USA. His father was a French Catholic, his mother a New Jersey Episcopalian. For business reasons the family moved to Mexico City, and in 1911 he joined the Salesians of St. John Bosco. In time he was put in charge of the minor seminary, and the recreation centre at Puebla. On 21st May, 1921, he was ordained priest by Archbishop Henry Sanchez Parades in the Cathedral of St. Michael, Puebla, after major studies at the Pontifical University of Palafox, Puebla.

After ordination he founded "La Buena Prensa", "The Good Press", to promote wholesome literature and cinema.

In 1922 he was appointed secretary to Archbishop William Piani, Apostolic Delegate in Manila, Philippines. Fr. Morrow served for seventeen years. He founded the Catholic Truth Society of Manila, and wrote a series of catechetical books and illustrated textbooks, chief of which was MY CATHOLIC FAITH, later renamed OUR CATHOLIC FAITH. Some of these books were printed by the thousands in forty languages and dialects, including Bengali translations prepared by Rev. Fr. Austin Guarneri, SDB, who passed away a year ago.

Fr. Morrow took a most active part in organizing the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila in February of 1937.

On 25th May, 1939, he was appointed Bishop of Krishnagar, and was ordained by Pope Pius XII in St. Peter's Basilica on 29th October, 1939. He always treasured the pectoral cross given by the Pope with the words, "This cross is the least heavy. I am sending you to an extremely poor place. Be a father to all!"

With donations realized from his begging tour in the U.S., he at once applied himself to the progress of the Don Bosco boarding and industrial schools for boys, and Holy Family School for girls managed by the Sisters of Charity of Sts. Vincenza Gerosa and Bartholomea Capitanio, who have been in the diocese for well over a hundred years.

During the disastrous famine in Bengal, of 1943-44, the bishop and his priests shared all they had with the people. He was chosen chairman of the Emergency Food Relief Committee, the only Christian among forty-nine members. He begged by mail day and night, from his benefactors, and in Calcutta, for war surplus food from Indian, British, Australian, and U.S. officers.

The Cathedral of the Holy Redeemer was enlarged in 1950-52 to triple its former size. A chapel of adoration was annexed, the fulfilment of a long-standing dream of the bishop.

In 1952 the bishop was elected commissioner of the Municipal Board—and re-elected for three more terms, totalling fourteen years. During this time a long-needed extension of the city's waterworks scheme was financed. The population had increased from 22,000 to nearly 89,000 upon partition of Bengal.

The bishop was also appointed official visitor to Nadia District Jail and to the Government Hospital.

He was the "Catholic Relief Services" representative for Northeast India from 1944 to 1959, when a permanent office in Calcutta was opened. It was a red-letter day in Krishnagar, when the T. B. Clinic received from the CRS an X-ray machine.

The large theatre hall accommodating two thousand people was originally a hangar, 140 × 80 feet—a gift from the bishop's friends in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1957. It is in constant use today.

Pope Paul VI responded generously to the bishop's appeal for help towards the erection of a town stadium. Today's youth are benefitting by it.

Bishop Morrow founded the Institute of Sisters of Mary Immaculate thirty-nine years ago. Today they number nearly four hundred Sisters and candidates—catechists, teachers, doctors, nurses, musicians, social workers. At tremendous sacrifice, with the help of benefactors, the bishop financed the education of his Sisters, for the spiritual and material benefit of women and children at all levels of society. Spiritual formation was and is ever in the foreground. Papal right was granted in 1966.

Throughout the diocese, over thirty chapels with priests' quarters were erected in the villages, and small houses for use of the Sisters.

From 1960 to 1968 the bishop was consultant of the Indian Red Cross Society of West Bengal. From 1969 to 1976 he was convenor of the Assessment Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)

At Vatican II, the bishop was a pioneer advocate of the "vernacular," and influential in modifying the law of abstinence, and changes in the Eucharistic fast.

In obedience to the *Motu Proprio* of Pope Paul VI, recommending that bishops retire at the age of 75, Bishop Morrow submitted his petition. On 31st October, 1969,

his request was accepted. All received the news with heavy hearts.

A civic reception was arranged by the Municipal Chairman, as people at all levels of society were eager to express their sentiments.

Rev. Fr. Louis Gobetti, SDB, became Vicar Capitalar. He had been the right arm of Bishop Morrow, as Vicar General and Diocesan Secretary for well over twenty years, a faithful and loyal "alter ego".

After retirement, the bishop continued in his apostolate of the printed word, particularly in distribution of the Holy Bible in English and Bengali. He was an advocate of women's rights, convinced that justice and peace cannot prevail until and unless women have an equal voice in legislative assemblies throughout the world. With great zeal he promoted the use of nonsexist (neutral) language in liturgy and in publications. He was ever available to confreres and friends and the needy who wished to receive his fatherly blessing.

His sister, Margarita de Vizcarrondo, resides in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Rt. Rev. L. R. Morrow, a noble son of the Church. and worthy son of Don Bosco, has gone to his eternal reward. May His soul rest in peace ! Amen.

PROVINCIAL OFFICE
SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO
52, Radhanath Chowdhury Road,
Calcutta-700 015

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RT. REV. L. R. MORROW S.D.B. DD.

Born : 24. 12. 1892, at Weatherford
Texas, U.S.A.

Died : 31. 08. 1987, at the age of 94
in Krishnagar, INDIA.

He was the Bishop of Krishnagar from 1939—1969

He founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

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