

OBITUARY OF
ARCHBISHOP GEORGE H. PEARCE, SM

The Most Reverend George H. Pearce, SM, 94, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Suva (Fiji Islands) died on Sunday, August 30, 2015. He was a member of the Society of Mary.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, son of the late George H. and Marie L. (Duval) Pearce, Sr., he attended St. Columbkille School in Brighton, Massachusetts, and Maryvale Seminary in Bedford, Massachusetts. In preparation for the priesthood, he studied at the Marist College and Seminary in Framingham, Massachusetts, and was ordained a priest on February 3, 1947 by Archbishop Richard J. Cushing at Our Lady of Victories Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

Father Pearce was a secondary school teacher at the Marist Fathers' Preparatory Seminary in Bedford, Massachusetts from 1947-48; and at St. Mary's High School in Van Buren, Maine from 1948-1949. From 1949-1956, he was a missionary in the Samoa Islands (South Pacific). In February 1956, he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Islands of Samoa and Tokelau and ordained a bishop on June 29, 1956 in Boston, Massachusetts. In June 1966, Bishop Pearce was appointed the first Bishop of the Diocese of Apia (Samoa) and in June 1967, he was transferred to the Metropolitan See as Archbishop of Suva (Fiji Islands). In 1969, he served also as administrator of the Diocese of Agaña (Guam and the Marianas Islands) and from 1969 to 1971, he was the first President of the Pacific Conference of Catholic Bishops (CEPAC).

Archbishop Pearce participated in the four eight-week sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome from 1962-1965 and was one of the last living Council Fathers. In October 1969, he also participated in the first Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. In April 1976, he resigned from the Metropolitan See of Suva (Fiji Islands) as archbishop emeritus and returned to the United States. >From 1977 to 1979, he served as a member of the Core Group of Bethany House of Intercession at Warwick Neck, Rhode Island, and from 1979 to 1983, at its location at Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. From 1983 until 1997 he was a personal assistant to Bishop Louis E. Gelineau and was in residence at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in Providence. In recent years, he continued to help with Confirmations and other pontifical ceremonies in the Diocese of Providence. He was very active in the charismatic and pro-life movements and on April 15, 1999, he received a pro-life award at the Pro-Life Conference held at the Inn at the Crossings in Warwick, Rhode Island. In recent years, he resided at Saint Antoine Residence, North Smithfield.

Archbishop Pearce leaves a brother, Paul F. Pearce of Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, and several nieces and nephews. He was the brother of the late Ruth Bruen, Marie Higgins, Dorothy Bruen, and John Pearce.

The Rite of Reception of his body will be celebrated on Friday, September 4, 2015 at the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Providence, Rhode Island, at 9:00AM. Visitation will follow until 11:00AM.

A Concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial will be offered for the repose of his soul at the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Providence, on Friday, September 4, 2015 at 11:00AM.

Burial will be at Sacred Heart Cemetery, Andover, MA at a later date.

