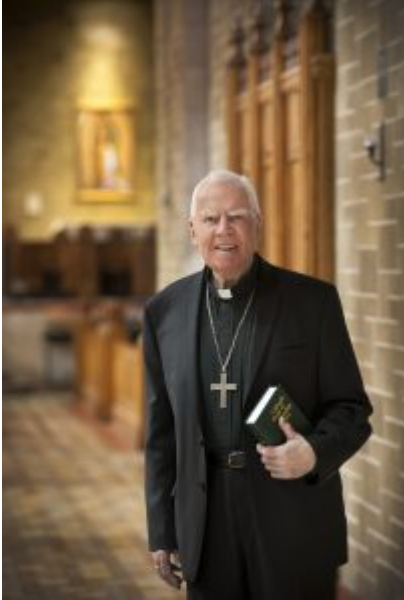


Joseph MacNeil, beloved Archbishop Emeritus of Edmonton, passes at 93



Most Rev. Joseph N. MacNeil, Archbishop Emeritus of Edmonton, photographed in 2015. Robert Bray Photo

Alberta's Catholic community has lost a beloved pastor, collaborator and friend with the death on Sunday of Most Rev. Joseph N. MacNeil, Archbishop Emeritus of Edmonton. He was 93.

His passing came as the Church observed the World Day of the Sick, when Catholics around the world pray for the sick and suffering, and those who care for them, and the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes, the patron saint of bodily ills.

MacNeil, a native of Nova Scotia, had made Alberta his home ever since he was appointed Archbishop of Edmonton on Sept. 5, 1973. During his 26-year term, he committed himself to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, empowering lay people in the Church, building friendships with other faith communities, and extending the Church's efforts in social justice.

Archbishop MacNeil was instrumental in arranging the visit of St. Pope John Paul II to Edmonton in 1984. But in all his time in Alberta, he said one of the biggest thrills was having a school named after him. He had a gift for connecting with young people, and loved to visit the students at "his school" in southwest Edmonton.

Although he officially retired in 1999, MacNeil continued to serve in many ways

– from filling in for Archbishop Richard Smith at official functions and presiding at Confirmations, to animating retreats and celebrating Mass at schools.

In 2014, marking MacNeil's 90th birthday, Archbishop Smith described him as "a true shepherd" and "an exemplary priest." He echoed the feelings of many when he told MacNeil: "Words really cannot express our appreciation for you and, indeed, our love for you."

Archbishop MacNeil died at the Grey Nuns hospital in Edmonton after suffering a stroke.

Funeral details have yet to be announced.