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Msgr. Vincent Foy cuts the cake for his 100th birthday celebration with Cardinal Thomas Collins sharing the moment. Msgr. Foy died at the age of 101 March 13. Register file photo

Msgr. Vincent Foy, longest-serving priest in Toronto Archdiocese, dies at 101

By [Michael Swan, The Catholic Register](#)

- March 14, 2017

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TORONTO – The oldest and longest serving priest in the history of the Archdiocese of Toronto has died. In his 78th year of priesthood, 101-year-old Msgr. Vincent Foy was proud of his longevity, his loyalty and his defence of Catholic teaching.

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In a [Catholic Register article](#) last December, Msgr. Foy, who died Mar. 13, wrote about being “perched on the precipice of eternity” as he recounted his long career.

In addition to being the longest ordained and the oldest diocesan priest in the history of the Archdiocese of Toronto, he found that only one other diocesan priest in Canadian history had served longer, a Fr. Roger Duval of Quebec City who served 78.5 years.

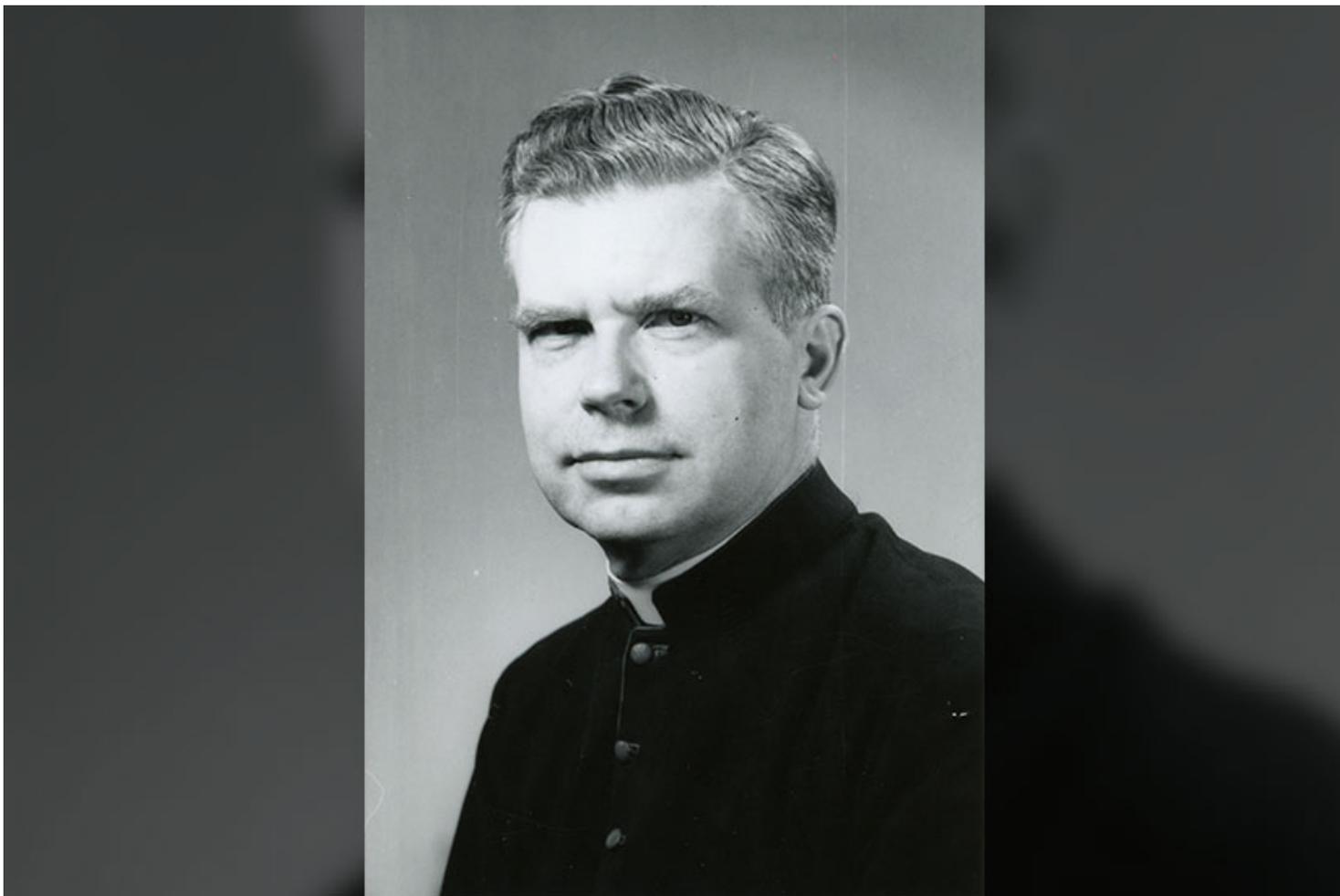
Worldwide, his research found only four priests, two of whom were still living, who spent more than 78 years in diocesan priestly ministry.

“Msgr. Foy inspired us by his fidelity and personal witness, serving the Lord and all those he encountered most generously,” said Toronto Cardinal Thomas Collins. “As a prayerful shepherd, champion of life issues and witness of loving service to others, may his legacy live on for years to come.”

Msgr. Foy served as a Eucharistic minister at two papal funerals, those of Pope Paul VI in 1978 and Pope John Paul I later that same year. He also served at the first Mass of Pope John Paul II.

When Msgr. Foy was ordained by Cardinal James McGuigan June 3, 1939 he fulfilled a promise he had made as a seven-year-old boy. In 1922 his mother was close to death and young Foy promised God that if she survived he would do all he could to become a priest. She lived.

Doing all he could became Msgr. Foy’s lifelong touchstone.



Msgr. Foy as a young priest in this undated photo. Photo courtesy of the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto (ARCAT)

After graduating from St. Augustine's Seminary in 1939, he was sent to study canon law at Laval University. Armed with a doctorate in canon law, he was immediately useful to the archdiocese as vice chancellor and secretary to the Toronto Archdiocesan Matrimonial Tribunal. When the tribunal became the Toronto Regional Marriage Tribunal he became defender of the bond and judge.

In 1957, at the age of 42, Pope Pius XII named Msgr. Foy a Prelate of Honour, earning him the title of Monsignor.

When Cardinal Paul-Emile Leger convoked the first meeting of the Canadian Canon Law Society in 1965, Msgr. Foy was among the founders.

But Msgr. Foy's long priestly career was not confined to canon law. He was for years the part-time director of catechetics for the archdiocese. In 1966 he became pastor of the parish he was born in, St. John's in Toronto's Beach neighbourhood. In the 1970s he was pastor first of Holy Martyrs of Japan in Bradford then of St. Patrick's in Phelpston.

He retired in 1979, but in 38 years of retirement Msgr. Foy was never idle. His dedication to the pro-life movement was constant and he campaigned furiously against the 1968 Winnipeg Statement, in which the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops had urged Catholics to read *Humanae Vitae* carefully and make their decisions about contraception according to their conscience.

His insistent and unrelenting pro-life preaching and writing saw Msgr. Foy named Pro-Life Man of the Year and inspired a 30-minute documentary on his life by EWTN in the United States.

After the celebration of the 75th anniversary of his ordination in 2014, Msgr. Foy recalled the significance of his rosary in his life.

"I had my rosary blessed by Pope Paul VI and served as Eucharistic minister at his funeral," he wrote. "Just before the coffin was closed, I touched my rosary to his hand. I had my rosary blessed by Pope John Paul I and again touched it to his hand when I served as Eucharistic minister at his funeral. I served at the first Mass of Pope John Paul II and my rosary was blessed by him. I

hope to be buried with that rosary... something tells me I should pack my bags.”

Visitation for Msgr. Foy will be held at Holy Family Parish, 1372 King St. W., March 17, 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. His Funeral Mass will be celebrated in Latin according to the extraordinary form at Holy Family, 11:30 a.m., March 18.

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