

# Retired Bishop Maher of San Diego dies at 75

By Dan E. Pitre  
Catholic News Service

SAN DIEGO — Retired San Diego Bishop Leo T. Maher, who led the San Diego diocese from 1969 to 1990, died Feb. 23 at age 75 in his home in San Diego after fighting brain cancer.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 27 with San Diego Bishop Robert H. Brom celebrating and Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, a former San Diego auxiliary bishop, as homilist.

Bishop Maher gained national attention in 1989 when he forbade California Senate candidate Lucy Killea, a state assemblywoman, from receiving Communion because of her support of abortion rights. Killea won the election.

Bishop Brom said in a Feb. 23 statement

that he had conferred the sacrament of the sick Feb. 22 on Bishop Maher and had offered with his predecessor prayers of final commendation.

Bishop Maher underwent two surgeries for a malignant brain tumor in 1990.

On July 10, 1990, two months after the second surgery, his resignation as bishop was accepted by Pope John Paul II, and he was succeeded by Bishop Brom, who had been coadjutor bishop since 1989.

Bishop Maher died quietly with his brother, Father Raymond Maher, a priest of the Diocese of San Jose, Calif., and his nurse, Sally Bowser, at his side.

Bowser told the *Southern Cross*, San Diego's diocesan newspaper, that Bishop Maher's condition had been deteriorating every day since Feb. 2, but the deteriora-

tion had grown more noticeable in the last few days.

"We always knew his condition was terminal and incurable," she said.

During his tenure, Bishop Maher pulled the San Diego diocese and the diocesan-run University of San Diego out of financial deficits.

He also established 19 new parishes as the population of registered Catholics in the diocese grew by 50 percent in two decades.

Bishop Maher established pastoral programs for Hispanics, Filipinos, Vietnamese and African-Americans, and is credited with the emergence of many Catholic direct-aid social service programs in the diocese.

Born July 1, 1915, in Mount Union, Iowa, Leo Thomas Maher was the fifth of nine children born to Thomas and Mary

Maher.

At age 12 he decided to join his uncle, Monsignor Edward Maher, in California. He attended California seminaries from high school on, and was ordained Dec. 18, 1943, for the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

In 1956, Bishop Maher became archdiocesan chancellor. In 1962, Pope John XXIII appointed him the founding bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif.

From 1962 to 1965, Bishop Maher was among the young Americans who helped mold the philosophy that emerged from the Second Vatican Council.

He became the third bishop of San Diego on Oct. 4, 1969.

Bishop Maher is survived by four brothers, including Father Maher, and four sisters, including Dominican Sister Mary Claire Maher of San Anselmo, Calif.

## Albanian priest predicts religious rights by spring

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — A Catholic Mass last November forced the Albanian government to back away from its hostile treatment of religion, but churches will not have legal rights until after scheduled elections in March, an Albanian priest said.

Father Simon Jubani, who spent 26 years in prison for being a priest under a vigorously atheistic communist government, visited Italy in February to talk with church

leaders.

When 50,000 people, many of whom were not Catholic, gathered in a cemetery last November for a Mass celebrated by Father Jubani, the government realized it could no longer stop cries for freedom, he said.

The government has promised to adopt a freedom of conscience law that would legalize religious practice, but it has yet to do so, Father Jubani said. Passage is not expected until after the elections.

Democratic forces in Albania face an almost impossible task of bringing religious freedom and human rights to their country, Father Jubani told Vatican Radio Feb. 21.

"It is people who change situations," he said. But most of the Albanian opponents to communism with the education and political savvy to change the situation have fled the country.

In an earlier interview with *Avvenire*, the Milan-based Catholic newspaper, Father Jubani called for the postponement of the elections in order to give the opposition parties more time to prepare.

One of the parties running against the communists is the Popular Party, which Father Jubani founded. He did not discuss his party in the Vatican Radio interview.

The government has made some concessions to those calling for freedom, including tolerating religious services and allowing opposition parties to propose candidates for the March 31 elections, Father Jubani said.

But after almost 50 years of repressive governments, the people do not believe the communists are serious about sharing power, so they continue to leave.

"The people want to go to the West at all costs," he said. "They don't want to remain in Albania because they have no hope

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AP/Wide World Photos  
**YOUTH KILLED** — Family members mourn the death of 14-year-old Salama Muslah Feb. 20 near the West Bank town of Bethlehem. The youth was shot after pelting a Jewish settler's car with stones.

## Gang violence leads to shooting, robberies at church celebration

DENVER (CNS) — After living through the horror of the Vietnam War, Denver-area Vietnamese immigrants are facing new horrors in the form of gangs.

As parishioners of Queen of the Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Church in the Denver suburb of Wheat Ridge, Colo., marked the Vietnamese lunar new year Feb. 16, a gang of young Vietnamese reportedly entered the parish center demanding money and jewelry.

Before the assailants fled, parishioner The Nguyen was shot and several others were beaten. An estimated 30 people were robbed.

Nguyen, 57, came to the United States in 1979 and had worked as a volunteer to help build the church, which was dedicated in

July 1990. He had his right leg amputated after being shot. Nguyen also had lost an eye fighting the North Vietnamese.

From his hospital bed at St. Anthony Hospital Central in Denver, Nguyen said his strongest desire was to return and serve the parish he loves.

Parishioners were not the only ones concerned about recent gang activity. Since the incident occurred, many Asian businessmen have expressed worry.

According to Thang Ngo, who fled to the United States in 1975, "In Vietnam, people were much closer together, and there was less gang activity. Here, gangs can watch over you step by step."

He suggested that to prevent gang

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