

WORLD & NATION

Cardinal Krol dies at 85; renowned for leadership

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) — Cardinal John J. Krol, the last of the key bishops who led the U.S. church through the Second Vatican Council, died at his home in Philadelphia March 3. He was 85.

In poor health in recent years from diabetes and a heart condition, the retired Philadelphia archbishop was hospitalized in mid-February for lung and kidney problems. At his request he was allowed to return home March 2 when it was clear he would not recover, and he died early the following morning.

His funeral was scheduled for noon on Friday, March 8, at the Basilica Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia, with burial to follow in the cathedral crypt.

A bishop since 1953 and a cardinal since 1967, Cardinal Krol was archbishop of Philadelphia from 1961 until his retirement in 1988.

He was the first vice president (1966-71) and second president (1971-74) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, the postconciliar national organizations of the U.S. hierarchy. In 1965 he headed the committee that reorganized the Na-

tional Catholic Welfare Conference into the NCCB and USCC.

Cardinal Krol also headed the bishops' committee that from 1967 to 1971 conducted a controversial U.S. priesthood study, one of the most massive and comprehensive studies of priests in history.

He was one of the leaders of Vatican II as undersecretary of the council. He was a member of the central commission formed after the council to interpret the council and coordinate post-conciliar commissions.

A son of Polish immigrants, he played important roles in strengthening the Polish church under communism and bringing Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Krakow to the attention of other church leaders around the world. In 1978 Cardinal Wojtyla was elected Pope John Paul II.

He also was a world leader in getting the Holy See to start issuing public financial reports and in helping it to bring mounting deficits of the 1970s and 1980s back under control.

In the United States he led the Catholic bishops in their fight against abortion before and after the 1973



CNS/File photo
Pope John Paul II greets Cardinal John J. Krol of Philadelphia at the Vatican in April last year. Cardinal Krol died March 3. He was 85.

Supreme Court ruling that legalized it nationwide.

His reputation as a conservative church leader gave added power to his 1979 testimony in Congress against nuclear defenses and his leadership in the early 1980s against the nuclear arms race.

"History will indeed record him as one of the most outstanding church leaders of the century," said Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, who was at Cardinal Krol's side when he died.

One of eight children of Anna and John Krol Sr., who met and married in Cleveland after immigrating from Poland, John Joseph Krol was born in Cleveland Oct. 26, 1910.

After theology studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Cleveland he was ordained a priest of the Cleveland Diocese Feb. 20, 1937. He served briefly in a parish,

then was sent to Rome for advanced studies and received a bachelor's degree and licentiate in canon law before World War II interrupted his studies.

Upon finishing his doctorate in canon law at The Catholic University of America in 1942, he taught at St. Mary's Seminary and held several diocesan posts in Cleveland, where he was chancellor when he was named an auxiliary bishop in 1953. In 1948 he was also president of the Canon Law Society of America.

When he was named archbishop of Philadelphia in 1961, at the age of 50, he was the youngest archbishop in the country.

As a charter member of a special Council of Cardinals formed by Pope John Paul II in 1981 to advise the Holy See on finances, Cardinal Krol led a move by top church leaders to establish uniform accounting procedures and yearly public reports for the church's central offices in Rome.

Shortly before his retirement in 1988 he announced the formation of the Papal Foundation, a permanent endowment to help support the Holy See and reverse what were then growing yearly deficits.

As head of the NCCB when the nation's highest court struck down virtually all restrictions on abortion, he was a powerful voice for the unborn.

A strong supporter of Catholic schools, he was a consistent and vocal advocate of public aid to parents of non-public school children, which he regarded as a simple matter of justice.

Cardinal Krol's death leaves the College of Cardinals with 159 members, of whom 115 are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave to elect a new pope.

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