

*Thanks be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for The Most Rev. Robert Charles Morlino, a great bishop and a dear, true friend.* For 19 years, I've offered this prayer, since the day that he became bishop of the Diocese of Helena, Montana (where I was ordained a priest; he was my bishop there for nearly four years).

Now, since his death on the eve of Solemnity of Jesus Christ the King, the prayer tearfully intensifies as I remember Bishop Morlino for his: selfless, self-giving witness to the virtues of Faith, Hope and Love; having the heart of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the Only Savior of the world, in his words and deeds; trust in God's mercy and love; joy in the Lord as he testified to the Teachings of Jesus and His Church; regular invitation and encouragement for all people to meet Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead in a life-changing way; humble recognition that he was a sinner in need of God's grace and mercy, that his purpose in life was Heaven; communion with God through daily prayer, His Church, Word, Sacraments and the communion of saints; devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; ordination as a bishop on September 21, 1999, in Saint Helena Cathedral, and his installation as bishop on August 1, 2003, in Saint Raphael Cathedral (I was blessed to concelebrate at both Masses); spiritual and practical advice through many profound, private conversations; true friendship as a brother in Christ.

I remember Bishop Morlino: concelebrating many Masses with him; for making me a better priest; on a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi; visiting Pope Saint John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger with him in November 2001; enabling me and two priest classmates to concelebrate a private Mass with Pope Saint John Paul II on November 13, 2000; inviting me to join the Diocese of Madison in June 2006 and incardinating me into the diocese at the Chrism Mass on March 18, 2008; as a true spiritual father to me, many priests, seminarians and laypersons. I like to think of him looking from his Heavenly window in Purgatory (a state of being in Heaven that prepares us for the fullness of God's glory), where Bishop Morlino said he would be if God judged him worthy of Heaven, benefitting from our prayers for him, praying for us to faithfully and joyfully proclaim in word and deed, with charity and clarity, that Jesus Christ is crucified and risen from the dead, the Vision that will not disappoint.

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