

July 3, 1992

Bishop John Baptist Franz



Bishop Franz was born Oct. 29, 1896 in Springfield, Ill. He was ordained June 13, 1920, in the chapel at Kenrick Seminary by the Most Rev. (later Cardinal) John Glennon, archbishop of St. Louis. He was elevated to the honor of papal chamberlain by Pope Pius XII on Jan. 2, 1942, and to domestic prelate on March 1, 1945.

He was rector at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield, Ill., when Pope Pius XII named him first bishop of the newly-created Diocese of Dodge City on June 6, 1951. He was consecrated to the episcopacy by Samuel Cardinal Stritch, archbishop of Chicago, in Springfield on Aug. 29. Bishop Franz was installed at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dodge City on Sept. 12, 1951, by Archbishop (later Cardinal) Joseph E. Ritter of St. Louis.

Bishop Franz was ordinary of Dodge City from 1951 to 1959. During those years 34 new parish buildings were constructed. On Aug. 12, 1959, Pope John XXIII named him the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Peoria.

When he left, the Dodge City diocese had a Catholic population of 25,850; 49 parishes and 11 missions. At Peoria, he assumed responsibility for a Catholic population of 200,006 with 157 parishes and 53 missions.

He retired to St. Joseph's Home in Peoria on June 1, 1971, and resided there until his death at the age of 95 on July 3, 1992. The Most Rev. John J. Myers, bishop of Peoria, celebrated his funeral at St. Mary's Cathedral in Peoria. Among those concelebrating were Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, archbishop of Chicago, and Dodge City Bishops Forst, Gerber, and Schlarman. Burial was in the Bishop's Mausoleum at St. Mary's Cemetery in Peoria.