

Cardinal Karl Lehmann, Led German Bishops' Conference



Cardinal Karl Lehmann

CNS/PAUL HARING

Cardinal Karl Lehmann, longtime president of the German bishops' conference and a respected theologian who participated in the Second Vatican Council, died March 11. He was 81.

He died at his home in Mainz after declining health and a stroke in September.

In a telegram to Bishop Peter Kohlgraf of Mainz, Pope Francis expressed his condolences and recognized how the late cardinal's service "shaped the life of the Church and society."

"He always cared about being open to the questions and challenges of the day and about offering responses and

guidance based on Christ's message in order to accompany people along their journey, seeking that which unites beyond the confines of religious denominations, beliefs and nations," the pope said in the telegram.

Cardinal Lehmann's death was marked by an outpouring of tributes from all major German media. Although memorials were diverse, all noted the cardinal for his strong opinions, intellectualism and boisterous personality.

Expressing her sadness upon hearing of Cardinal Lehmann's death, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a statement that she was "deeply grateful" for the conversations and meetings she had with him through the years.

She called him "an exceptionally gifted mediator," not only in talks between German Catholics and the Vatican, but "also in the spirit of the economic movement between the Christian churches and between Christians and believers of other religions," according to Vatican News.

Cardinal Lehmann led the German bishops' conference for 21 years, resigning in 2008 because of health issues. However, he continued to lead

the Diocese of Mainz—where he was appointed in 1983—until 2016, when he turned 80.

The cardinal, who participated in the Second Vatican Council, worked to improve the position of women and laypeople in the Church.

He also was one of three German bishops who in 1994 allowed Communion to be given to Catholics who were divorced and remarried without their first marriages being annulled, until the Vatican stopped the practice. After months of dialogue with

the three bishops, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a letter to the world's bishops restating that Catholics in that situation could not receive Communion.

Cardinal Lehmann was born in Sigmaringen, Germany, and became a priest in Rome in 1963. There he attended sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Before being made bishop of Mainz, he was professor of theology at the city's university.

St. John Paul II made him a cardinal in 2001. —CNS

Sister Francine, Was Principal in Nyack

Sister M. Francine Connolly, I.H.M., who served as principal of St. Ann's School in Nyack for a year, died Feb. 25 at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton, Pa. She was 94.

She was principal of St. Ann's, 1988-1989. She also was principal of two schools in Pennsylvania in the 1960s and 1970s.

She taught at St. Mary School, Manhasset, 1989-2001; St. Raymond School, East Rockaway, 1975-1988; and Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School, Forest Hills, 1969-1970. She taught in Pennsylvania, 1944-1961.

Born in Manhattan, Sister Francine entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1941 and made final vows in 1947. She held a bachelor's degree in English and social studies, and a master's in religious education, both from Marywood College in Scranton. She also held a master's in education from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

A Funeral Mass was offered March 1 at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton. Burial was at St. Catherine's Cemetery in Moscow, Pa.

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