

Most Reverend Aloysius Wycislo
1969-1983

(Excerpt from Msgr. Mark Schommer, "Bishop Aloysius Wycislo: A Man for All Seasons," *Salesiamum*, Spring/Summer 1986, pp. 5-8.)

Bishop Aloysius Wycislo was born in Chicago on June 17, 1908, son of Simon Charles and Victoria Czech Wycislo. Al Wycislo, as he was known to his classmates and friends, attended St. Mary's Parish School in Cicero, Quigley Minor Seminary in Chicago, and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein.

On April 7, 1934, Aloysius Wycislo was ordained to the priesthood. His first assignment was as assistant pastor, St. Michael's Parish, Chicago. He was the force behind the building of the parish youth center. In 1939, he was assigned to the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Charities as an assistant supervisor. He also attended Catholic University, in Washington, D. C., and received a master's degree in social work in 1942.

In 1943, he was released from the Archdiocese to serve Catholic Relief Services. He embraced a new set of challenges, as the world was locked in the pain, agony and misery of a world war. Father Wycislo was sent to the Egypt, India and Africa. He helped direct the disbursement of food, clothing and medical supplies to the civilian victims of the war. What was burned into Father Wycislo's mind by compassion would one day become the motto he would choose when ordained a bishop—"Cari tati Instate" (charity instate).

When the war ended, Father Wycislo established a headquarters in Paris from which he directed the settlement of persons displaced by the war. This was followed by organizing civilian relief programs in Europe, and Central and South America. Then, in 1948, he was selected to serve as the director of resettlement programs for refugees and displaced persons in Europe and the Middle and Far East.

In 1959, he returned to the Archdiocese of Chicago to become pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish on the near north side of the city. On October 7, 1960, Msgr. Wycislo was named Titular Bishop of Stadia and Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, under Cardinal Albert Meyer.

Being a bishop brought about another set of challenging opportunities that called forth additional talents for Bishop Wycislo. He served as Chairman of the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission and directed the Archdiocesan observance of the Millennium of Christianity in Poland. He was tapped by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to serve on the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, Commission for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs, and was Vice Chairman of Judaeo-Christian Affairs. He served ten years on the Administrative Board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/ United States Catholic Conference. He was also a member of the White House Citizens' Committee for Immigration Reform.

The crowning of these years was participation in the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. He saw Vatican II as renewing the Church by planting new seed ideas to be cultivated, meditated upon and developed by Christians for their day and for the Church's tomorrow.

On March 8, 1969, Bishop Aloysius J. Wycislo became the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay. In 1969, there were 317,527 Catholics and 211 parishes in the diocese's sixteen counties. Yet, the impact of Vatican II had hardly been felt in the diocese. Bishop Wycislo set about awakening in the people of God a deepening of love for God and his Church. He intended to bring the "aggiornamento of Vatican II to this local church." Upon his retirement in 1983, the Catholic population had grown to 347,277 and there were structures, organizations and programs that gave evidence of a vibrant, healthy, modern diocesan church, evidence that an "aggiornamento" had taken place. Bishop Wycislo led these changes and, with his vision, made his experiences and hopes of Vatican II come alive.

Among his first actions upon becoming an Ordinary was to establish solicitous programs for the priests. All through his years in Green Bay, he showed great affection and care for "his priests." He also established the Family Life Office; it would assist over 1,500 engaged couples prepare for marriage every year. Bishop Wycislo also began a deacon formation program; by the time he retired, the Diocese had 58 deacons.

Bishop Wycislo's compassion to those with special needs, sensitized by his travel and experiences with Catholic Relief Services, influenced the growth of diocesan programs and services. Catholic Social Services were expanded and Ministry to the Deaf, the Office of Social Concerns, Native American Ministry and the Campaign for Human Development were set in place during his tenure. His experiences on ecumenical commissions for the Bishops' Conference gave rise to the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission. And the reach of the Diocesan Education Department was greatly expanded during the time of Bishop Wycislo; with his support and encouragement, a catechetical program was written that was translated into seven languages and used extensively in the United States and abroad.

Finally, in response to the call of Vatican II for greater lay participation in the Church, Bishop Wycislo created the Diocesan Pastoral Council and urged the establishment of parish councils. He also encouraged the use of Boards of Education within the system. He divided the diocese into 12 vicariates to facilitate consultation and administration. He set up a Diocesan Pastoral Planning Office and consulted widely on the needs of the people. He directed that each parish had a mission and planning statement, updated every five years. To insure adequate resources, Bishop Wycislo created the Diocesan Services Appeal and he centralized the diocesan departments at one location.