FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Veronica Ambuul, vambuul@coloradocatholic herald.com; 719-866-6489

Msgr. Donald Dunn, who was instrumental in establishing Catholic Charities in Colorado Springs, dies at age 82

COLORADO SPRINGS. Msgr. Donald Dunn, who was a priest of the Diocese of Colorado Springs for more than 30 years, died Sept. 5 at age 82 in Wheat Ridge.

Vigils will take at Holy Family Parish, 4377 Utica St., Denver, on Sept. 12 at 7 p.m. and at St. Patrick Parish, 6455 Brook Park Dr., Colorado Springs, on Sept. 15 at 7 p.m. Bishop Michael J. Sheridan will be the principal celebrant at a Mass of Christian Burial on Sept. 16 at 1 p.m. at St. Patrick. Inurnment will take place at St. Mary’s Cathedral at a later date.

Msgr. Dunn was born in Denver on Dec. 12, 1936, the oldest of three sons born to Frances and Mary Dunn. The family belonged to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Msgr. Dunn attended Blessed Sacrament School and Regis High School and enrolled in St. Thomas Seminary in 1954. In 1958, he continued his studies at the North American College in Rome. He was one of 54 men ordained to the priesthood at St. Peter’s Basilica on Dec. 20, 1961, by Bishop Martin O’Connor.

His first assignment was as assistant pastor at Notre Dame Parish in Denver from 1962-1966. Archbishop Urban Vehr then sent him to Catholic University to obtain a master’s degree in social work.

Upon returning to Denver in 1968, Msgr. Dunn was named assistant director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Denver. He was asked to start a Catholic Charities office in Colorado Springs, and for the next two years he worked to establish Catholic Community Services, which eventually became Catholic Charities of Central Colorado.

The agency was founded during a time when Catholic Charities agencies nationwide were shifting their focus from adoptions and foster care to parish social ministry.

“There was a whole lot more emphasis on parishes working with social ministry programs — a lot more emphasis on emergency assistance and low-income housing,” Msgr. Dunn said.

In 1977, he was elected president of the National Council of Catholic Charities for a term of two years.
“It was a great honor,” Msgr. Dunn recalled in a 2015 interview. “I spent a lot of time visiting Catholic Charities agencies all over the country and learned a great deal in that whole process.”

In 1982, Msgr. Dunn was named Vicar for Family Life and Youth, but he felt called to mission work. The following year he traveled to a mission in Monteria, Colombia, where he planned to remain for five years.

“In Colombia, I was a parish priest — walking with people, helping people learn their faith more deeply and live it more completely,” Msgr. Dunn said.

A serious illness forced Msgr. Dunn to return to Denver in 1985. With mission work no longer an option, he set his sights on Colorado Springs.

“During that time I was away, the Diocese of Colorado Springs was created in 1984,” Msgr. Dunn said. “Bishop (Richard) Hanifen, who was a dear lifelong friend, was made bishop and he asked me if I might consider transferring.”

In 1987, Msgr. Dunn was incardinated in the newly-created diocese and named pastor of St. Patrick Parish. In 1991, while still serving at St. Patrick, Msgr. Dunn was named vicar general of the diocese by Bishop Hanifen.

“It was a lovely period of excitement and energy,” Msgr. Dunn said. “The diocese was growing rapidly and Bishop Hanifen needed help.”

In 1997, he was named rector of St. Mary’s Cathedral.

Msgr. Dunn retired from full-time ministry in 2007. On Feb. 21, 2009, he was one of the three priests in the Diocese of Colorado Springs to be elevated to the level of Prelates of Honor by Pope Benedict XVI, with the title of Reverend Monsignor.

“The deepest joy of priesthood for me is the incredible blessing of walking with people in their good times and their hard times,” Msgr. Dunn said. “I’ve been blessed to have these incredible experiences, but in the end it’s always walking with people.”

For the past several years, Msgr. Dunn resided at the Gardens of St. Elizabeth in Denver. He is survived by his brother, Michael, sister-in-law Peggy, and several nieces and nephews.

Memorial contributions may be made to Catholic Charities of Central Colorado or Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House in Sedalia.