



DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 27, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord:

Peace and wellbeing to you and your families in this new Year of Grace.

In the spirit of the sure and certain joy of Our Lord's victory over death, I kindly ask that you join me in offering thankful prayers for Very Reverend Monsignor Tom Wallace, who passed away into Eternal Life on Sunday, January 22, 2023, at St. Adelaide Parish rectory in Highland, California. We ask our Lord Jesus to comfort each and every one of us as we face this very untimely and sudden death of such a beloved priest, servant, and friend.

Thomas Mitchell Wallace was born on September 5, 1953, in Fontana, California to Alfred Lee and Elaine Ruth (Wilson) Wallace, both of whom preceded their son in death several years ago; his brother Michael Wallace also preceded him in death. Tom Wallace was the fourth of six children born to the Wallace family. He attended local elementary schools in Rialto and graduated from Eisenhower High School in Rialto in 1971. After attending San Bernardino Valley College for one year, he discerned the call to the priesthood and entered Saint Francis College Seminary in San Diego for the Diocese of San Diego. While obtaining his formation at Saint Francis College Seminary, he took undergraduate college classes simultaneously at the University of San Diego (USD) and was awarded the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy from USD in June 1976. He was zealous in his priestly vocation and then continued his theological studies for the Diocese of San Diego (and later the newly formed Diocese of San Bernardino) at Saint Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, where he obtained the Master of Divinity Degree in 1980.

Monsignor Wallace had the unique distinction of being the first priest ordained for the newly formed Diocese of San Bernardino. He was ordained at Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral, San Bernardino, by the imposition of hands of Emeritus Bishop Phillip F. Straling on January 18, 1980 and began a long journey of serving our Church for over 40 years. His first priestly assignment was as Parochial Vicar at St. Peter and St. Paul Parish, Alta Loma (1980 to 1984). He then heard the missionary call of the Holy Spirit and received permission from Bishop Straling to undertake ministry with the Society of Saint James, a diocesan missionary group; he ministered with impoverished communities in Peru and Ecuador for three years from 1984 to 1987 and became extremely fluent in the Spanish language and

strongly rooted in ministry to the Latino community. He returned to the Diocese of San Bernardino in 1987 and served as Parochial Vicar at Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral, San Bernardino. In 1987, he was named Pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, Barstow, then was named Pastor of Saint James the Less Parish, Perris from 1991 to 1996. From 1996 to 1998 he served as Pastor of Saint Joan of Arc Parish, Blythe. Later he served as Pastor of Saint Martha Parish, Murrieta from 1998 to 2003. In 2003, he was named Pastor of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, La Quinta. Over the course of his many parish assignments, he also served as Vicar Forane.

Monsignor Wallace also faithfully served the local Diocesan Church in many important positions. Bishop Emeritus Gerald R. Barnes appointed him as Vicar General of the Diocese from 1999 to 2001. On June 30, 2001, Pope Saint John Paul II named then Father Tom Wallace as Chaplain to His Holiness with the title of Monsignor, a recognition that was requested by Bishop Barnes for many years of outstanding priestly service and dedication; this was the first time Bishop Barnes requested this as Diocesan Bishop. On July 1, 2004, Bishop Barnes appointed Monsignor Wallace as the first Episcopal Vicar of the newly created Riverside Pastoral Region, a ministry which he fulfilled so well for nine years until July 1, 2013, when he stepped down as Episcopal Vicar to become Director of the Missions Office and Vicar for Priests. It was in the same year of 2013 that he also received the “Amar es Entregarse” Award in recognition of his dedicated ministry.

As Riverside Episcopal Vicar, he also served as the Priest Moderator of several parishes guided by Pastoral Coordinators, and also continued to serve on many important committees such as the Diocesan Finance Council, the Presbyteral Council, and numerous corporate boards. With the challenge of the COVID pandemic, Monsignor Wallace accepted the pastorate at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Riverside on July 1, 2020, and served that community faithfully for two years. On July 1, 2022, I was happy to re-appoint Monsignor Wallace to full-time ministry in the Missions Office and as Vicar for Priests, as he tirelessly dedicated himself to the priestly ministry which he loved so much. His care and compassion were great gifts for our newly-ordained priests and our retired, ill priests who received his constant personal support and friendly visits.

In his final months of service, Monsignor Wallace was a very active supply priest in the midst of his Diocesan ministry. He was cheerfully on call as chaplain at Saint Bernardine Medical Center, San Bernardino and comforted countless families at funeral Masses at Our Lady Queen of Peace Cemetery, Colton. Never wavering in his commitment to serve our people in any need, he endeared himself to all who knew him, as they will remember his gentle presence, his “saintly” greeting, welcoming smile, and inspirational words of wisdom.

Let us offer thanks to Our Lord Jesus for the truly remarkable life and ministry of Monsignor Tom, now that he is enjoying the company of his Good Shepherd and Lord. I thank you for offering prayers for his immediate family: brothers Bill Wallace and Jim Wallace, of Desert Hot Springs and Apple Valley, respectively; and sisters Cindy Gutierrez of Friday Harbor, Washington and Sue Wallace of Oregon; in addition to numerous nephews, nieces and cousins throughout the country. We thank the Wallace family for the tremendous gift of their brother who gave so much to so many.

I kindly invite you to join in the important funeral liturgies which as a local Church we will offer for Monsignor Wallace's memory. The Vigil Service will take place on Sunday, February 5, 2023, at Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral, 2525 North Arrowhead Avenue, San Bernardino 92405 starting at 2:00 PM with public viewing and recitation of the Rosary; the Vigil Service Liturgy will take place at 6:00 PM; additional public viewing will take place from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. I will preside at the Funeral Mass on Monday, February 6, 2023, at Saint Paul the Apostle Parish, 14085 Peyton Drive, Chino Hills 91709 at 10:00 AM, with His Eminence Cardinal Robert W. McElroy from San Diego (a seminary classmate of Monsignor Wallace) and our Emeritus Bishop Gerald R. Barnes as concelebrants. The Rite of Committal and Burial will take place on Monday, February 6, 2023, at Our Lady Queen of Peace Cemetery, 3510 Washington Street, Colton 92324 at 1:30 PM. After the burial, all are invited to a reception at St. Adelaide Parish, 27457 Baseline Street, Highland 92346.

I ask my brother priests to offer the customary three Masses of suffrage for Monsignor Wallace's eternal rest. Also, in lieu of flowers, donations to our Seminarian Endowment will be happily received in Monsignor Wallace's memory as a priest of 43 years. May Our Lord Jesus, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Saint Bernardine of Siena admit Monsignor Wallace to the Heavenly Banquet in the glories of Eternal Life.

Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into your master's joy. Amen.

Fraternally in Christ's Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alberto Rojas".

Most Reverend Alberto Rojas
Bishop of San Bernardino