



Rosary for the Bishop Goes National

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Madison, Wisconsin - Rosary for the Bishop, an online prayer campaign for Roman Catholic bishops, is launching a new website sporting an updated look and many new features. The service allows people to sign up to pray for their bishop online, then sends reminders so participants don't forget to pray. The website, www.rosaryforthebishop.org, is scheduled to go live on January 1, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

Rosary for the Bishop was started at Christmas of 2005 as a gift for Madison's Bishop Robert Morlino. Morlino had had a difficult year, facing many challenges, including the destruction of St. Raphael Cathedral by arson early in the year. "We thought the good Bishop could use some prayers and encouragement," said Syte Reitz, a Madison-area Catholic. At an October meeting of the Madison Catholic Woman's club, Reitz collected about 30 prayer pledges from friends, presenting them to Bishop Morlino in a Christmas card thanking him for his work.

Reitz's son Tom, a computer science student, liked the idea and offered to make a website where people could sign up online. "I was just starting to make websites for friends and acquaintances, and I was learning about the power and reach of the Internet as an evangelization tool," says Tom. By Christmas 2005, the website had attracted over 150 participants, including priests, seminarians, and other prominent Madison Catholics.

In 2006, Syte and Tom extended Rosary for the Bishop for another year, then another, and another. All the while the project was growing: "by Christmas of 2008 we had over 300 participants from about 50 parishes throughout the Diocese," Tom said.

"This year, we wanted to make another Rosary for the Bishop campaign for Bishop Walker Nickless of the Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa. We quickly realized that with only a bit of additional work, we could make Rosary for the Bishop available for all US bishops," said Tom Reitz, whose web development company now oversees the website. The site will optionally send a reminder message by email or Twitter so participants don't forget to pray.

Rosary for the Bishop was inspired by a passage from Exodus (17:11), which refers to Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands during battle. "We need to support our Bishops' hands so that they do not weary in the battle for the faith. Many Catholics pray the Rosary every day. Why not pray one for our bishops? They are our shepherds, and their job is not easy. They need and deserve our prayers," said Syte Reitz.

The new website will allow users to sign up to pray for multiple bishops. "If you want to pray for Bishop Morlino on Mondays, and Archbishop Dolan of New York on the first Friday of every month, you can do that. And the neat part is that you can see statistics about how many other people are praying too," explained Tom.

To sign up for Rosary for the Bishop, visit www.rosaryforthebishop.org/join. News and updates will be available via Facebook (search "Rosary for the Bishop") and Twitter (@RftBp).