

Bishop Sherlock Biography

The Most Reverend John Michael Sherlock
Born: January 20, 1926 in Regina, Saskatchewan
Deceased: August 12, 2019

Ninth Bishop of London from August 21, 1978 until his retirement April 27, 2002

John Michael Sherlock was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, on January 20, 1926. He grew up in Brantford, Ontario with his parents, two sisters, and five brothers. After high school, called by God, he entered St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 3, 1950. Incredibly, he was one of three priests from his family, along with his brothers Philip and William.

Immediately after his priestly ordination, then-Father Sherlock began graduate work in canon law. He completed his licentiate in 1952 and began parochial work in Hamilton, Ontario, and then Dundas, Ontario. He later returned to Hamilton as pastor of St. Charles Garnier parish, where he had the responsibility of building a new church for a growing community. Throughout this time, he was involved in the Diocese of Hamilton's tribunal, the Newman chaplaincy (both locally and nationally), and co-operative housing. He taught Sacred Scripture at McMaster University and worked closely with school and hospital boards.

In 1974, Pope Saint Paul VI named John Michael Sherlock as the Auxiliary to London's then-Bishop G. Emmett Carter. Bishop Sherlock was ordained on August 28, 1974. Four years later, he was named the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of London and installed at St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica on August 21, 1978, by his predecessor, then-Archbishop Carter.

For 24 years, from 1978 to 2002, Bishop Sherlock served as the Bishop of London. He was a deeply spiritual man with a keen intelligence, a natural ability to lead, and a joyful sense of humour. A lifelong priest and shepherd, he was deeply and lovingly committed to Jesus, his Church, and her people.

Bishop Sherlock led the Diocese through the final quarter of the twentieth century, a time of social upheaval when the Church searched for new ways to continue its mission. With his leadership, the Diocese adopted a profound shift in the concept of ministry, one which affected not only priests and religious, but the laity and diocesan administrators.

A tireless and forward-thinking Bishop, John Sherlock made important contributions in Catholic education, health care, social justice, pastoral care, and the implementation of changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council. His influence reached across not only the Diocese but across Ontario and Canada.

In September 1983, Bishop Sherlock was elected president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). He was tasked with organizing the 1984 papal visit to Canada. He made countless trips to Ottawa and Rome to plan logistics, navigate schedules, and help fine-tune Pope Saint John Paul II's public speeches. Bishop Sherlock accompanied the Pope during the cross-country visit in September 1984, an

odyssey which resulted in a lasting friendship between the two. The papal visit was one of the highlights of Bishop Sherlock's episcopacy, and indeed of his life.

Bishop Sherlock inspired a strong bond of fraternity among the priests of the diocese as well as the men studying for the priesthood at St. Peter's Seminary. The seminary, which was comprehensively restored in the final years of Bishop Sherlock's lifetime, remains a viable centre of formation for both seminarians and lay students, thanks in large part to the PENTECOST 2000 capital campaign which Bishop Sherlock launched in 1989. Response from diocesans was incredible and the campaign raised more than \$21-million. This provided a lasting endowment for St. Peter's Seminary, as well as the vital funding need to establish a Youth Ministry Office, the Diocesan Refugee Office, the Office of Liturgy, and the Justice Office, all of which continue in some form.

On April 27, 2002, Rome accepted Bishop Sherlock's resignation. He chose to spend his retirement years in the city of London, so that he could remain in the diocese which he considered his home. Even in retirement, he remained active by teaching, conducting retreats and parish missions, helping at parishes on weekends, and participating in diocesan celebrations. He continued hearing confessions and celebrating Mass almost every Monday at the cathedral into late 2018.

Bishop Sherlock passed away peacefully on Monday, August 12, 2019 in his 94th year.

When he was elevated to the episcopacy, Bishop Sherlock chose *Omnia et in omnibus Christus* as his episcopal motto. Translated into English, his motto proclaimed that "There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything" (Col. 3: 11, Jerusalem Bible). These words guided him throughout his term as Bishop and until his last hour.