

John Cardinal Dearden Embodied the Characteristics of an Ideal Bishop

A MAN OF FAITH who bears testimony to the reality of God and commits his ministry to expressing God's love as manifested through the sacred Word, the Incarnation, the Holy Breath of the Spirit and *sensus fidelium*;

A MAN OF LOVE, expressed in word, deed and demeanor, who exercises his leadership through devoted, humble service to people and a life of simplicity;

A MAN OF WISDOM who brings the teachings and challenges of Vatican II to the everyday lives of his people through witness, education, programming, reform and renewal;

A TEACHER AND LEARNER who emphasizes and models the life-long process of catechesis, formation, and education;

AN INTELLECTUAL who keeps abreast of scholarship in theology, scripture, liturgy as well as the arts, sciences and technology;

A PASTOR who is in touch with people, sensitive and responsive to their joys, hopes, questions, doubts and sufferings, and who inspires his pastors to do the same;

A LEADER WHO IS ATTENTIVE AND RESPONSIVE to the ever-changing signs of the times;

A LISTENER who seeks and welcomes many points of view, even when they differ from his own, and who strives for consensus through a process of participatory consultation and decision-making which strengthen outcomes, especially diocesan policies, programs and planning;

A VISIONARY of an informed, mature Church whose members are given opportunities to exercise their rights and responsibilities as baptized Catholics to embrace their identity as the People of God and to make decisions that affect their lives as adults;

AN INNOVATOR who is willing to try new ways to deepen the faithful's intellectual understanding, pastoral/liturgical practices and outreach;

A COMMUNITY LEADER who honors the separation of Church and State and works with other faith leaders to provide meaningful opportunities to convene, celebrate common values, address pressing problems, develop solutions and worship—together;

A PERSON OF CONSCIENCE AND INTEGRITY who is committed to sound moral principles and not deterred even in the face of adverse criticism;

A MAN OF PRAYER WHOSE SPIRITUALITY mirrors God's self-revelation of Love through scripture, the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the life of the Spirit and the human family;

AN ENABLER WHO CALLS FORTH THE GIFTS OF OTHERS and who provides resources and structures for them to contribute those gifts in service to the People of God;

AN OVERSEER of diocesan and parish structures designed for participants on all levels to listen, consult and respond—participants include all strata of laity, religious communities, clergy, diocesan staff, and minority and ethnic voices;

AN EFFECTIVE MANAGER OF TIME AND TALENTS, trusting and affording staff, the freedom and creativity to work toward achieving the published diocesan goals and objectives;

AN EFFECTIVE STEWARD of financial resources to bear witness to Christian values, to foster faith, to serve the poor and disenfranchised, and to pursue social justice as constitutive of the Church's mission; for maximum transparency, he would publish an annual financial report over his signature;

A FEARLESS PROPHET of love, peace and justice who is steadfast and courageous in challenging his priests and people to make those moral values manifest in their daily lives as disciples of Christ;

A HUMBLE SERVANT of God and people who wisely balances the intent of church law and the application of its Gospel spirit;

A CHANGE-AGENT, tireless in efforts to evaluate and enhance the operations, policies and staffing of the diocese in order to advance its mission of education, service, worship—for all ages; to this end, every ten years he would call a diocesan synod to solicit recommendations from the grassroots level for restructuring, reform, renewal and implementation wherever possible;

AN ADVOCATE AND CHAMPION of collaboration, consultation, communication and shared responsibility with fellow bishops through their national conference and with laity and clergy through fully operational diocesan/parish/priest councils;

A PROPONENT OF ARBITRATION AND DUE PROCESS for the just treatment of grievances within the arch/diocese by developing policies, procedures and

structures to protect the rights of church employees, lay people, clergy and religious;

A BRIDGE BUILDER who embraces diversity and tolerance, respecting the dignity and equality of persons regardless of position, orientation and economic status, physical or mental impairment;

A PROFESSIONAL WHO IS A COMPETENT COMMUNICATOR—interacting with the press, media and public forums, articulating Church policy and doctrine, engaging in dialogue as appropriate—and who is comfortable fielding questions about current or controversial topics;

A DREAMER who, like Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis, dares to imagine an ever-vibrant Church and cares enough to try to shape it, even if successful outcomes cannot be guaranteed; and

A HUMBLE, HOLY MAN OF HOPE AND JOY—inspiring, enabling and empowering the People of God to continue their life-long journey of faith, witness and service based on God’s abundant love, His presence and promises fulfilled in Christ, the Spirit of God and the Body of Christ.

One may think that no single bishop could possibly possess all these qualities but in fact, they describe John Cardinal Dearden, Archbishop of Detroit, 1958-1980. He participated in all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council, was the first president of the NCCB, architect of the first Call to Action Justice Conference and an extraordinary leader during the golden age of renewal after the Council. He is remembered with deep love, respect and gratitude by those whom he served so diligently. His legacy will be documented by Judy M. Holmes in a forthcoming book with the tentative title, “Living the Wisdom of Vatican II: The Voice and Vision of John Cardinal Dearden.”

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