



DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT

Department of Communication

News

For Immediate Release

DATE: April 11, 2026
FROM: Deacon David Montgomery
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Diocese of Davenport
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RE: Most Rev. William E. Franklin, D.D.

It is with great sadness and hope in the Resurrection the Catholic Diocese of Davenport announces the death of the Most Reverend William Franklin, 7th Bishop of Davenport. Bishop Franklin passed away peacefully under the compassionate care of the Carmelite Sisters.

From Bishop Dennis Walsh, Bishop of Davenport:

“Known throughout Southeastern Iowa as a “gentle shepherd,” Bishop Franklin’s tenure was defined by a profound kindness and a pastoral heart. His leadership was marked by a quiet strength and an unwavering commitment to the people of his diocese. Even in his retirement and final days, those who cared for him noted that his characteristic warmth and gratitude never wavered.”

“Bishop Franklin embodied the heart of a servant. His legacy is not found merely in the administration of the Church, but in the thousands of lives he touched with his gentle spirit and Christ-like compassion.”

The Diocese invites the faithful and the public to honor Bishop Franklin’s life and ministry during the following liturgies, all to be held at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport:

- **Rite of the Reception of the Body**
 - Thursday, April 16, 2026 | 4:00 pm
- **The Vigil Service**
 - Thursday, April 16, 2026 | 6:00 pm
- **The Funeral Liturgy**
 - Friday, April 17, 2026 | 10:30 am

Visitation will be held from 4 until 6 p.m. at the Cathedral. There will be additional visitation at the Cathedral on Friday from 9:30 a.m. until Mass begins. Memorials may be made to the Priests’ Aid Society or to the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Davenport.

On the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary as a priest, Bishop Franklin said, “God has given me the opportunity to help others live moments which were difficult, but became a real source of growth for them and their relationship with God.”

He was deeply beloved for his accessibility and his ability to see the dignity in every person he encountered. The Diocese requests prayers for the repose of his soul and for the comfort of his family, friends, and the many parishioners whom he served.

Born on May 3, 1930, in Parnell, Iowa, Bishop Franklin was the sixth of seven children born to John F. and Matilda (Milholin) Franklin. He was baptized the day of his birth at St. Joseph Church in Parnell.

continued



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Bishop Franklin received his early education at Parnell Consolidated School and graduated from St. Patrick's High School in Cedar Rapids. He continued his studies at Loras College in Dubuque, graduating in 1952, and completed his studies at Mount Saint Bernard Seminary in Dubuque.

He was ordained to the priesthood on February 4, 1956, at Saint Raphael Cathedral in Dubuque by Archbishop Leo Binz. His early ministry included serving as secretary to Archbishop Henry P. Rohlman, followed by assignments as associate pastor in Independence and Rowley, and later in Waterloo. He also served as a teacher and Director of Guidance at Wahlert High School in Dubuque.

Throughout his priesthood and years of service to the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Bishop Franklin held numerous pastoral and leadership roles, including pastorates in Fayette, Hawkeye, Gilbertville, and Waterloo, as well as Dean of the Waterloo Deanery and vicar general of the archdiocese.

On January 29, 1987, he was appointed Titular Bishop of Surista and Auxiliary Bishop of Dubuque, and was ordained a bishop April 1, 1987, with the Principal Consecrator being Most Reverend Daniel W. Kucera, O.S.B., Archbishop of Dubuque. On November 12, 1993, he was appointed the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Davenport and was installed on January 20, 1994, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

During his tenure as Bishop of Davenport, Bishop Franklin was known for his steady leadership, pastoral care, and deep commitment to the people of the diocese. He faithfully guided the diocese until his retirement on October 12, 2006. He had been a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and a member of the Knights of Columbus. Later, a residence hall was named after him at St Ambrose University.

He is survived by his sister, Elvarose Squires of Cedar Rapids, along with numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and siblings: Vernon and Robert Franklin, Berniece Woodrum, Vera Crofter, and Harriet Farnham.

Online condolences may be expressed by Bishop Franklin's obituary at www.hmdfuneralhome.com

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