

# Wisconsin Catholic's prayer effort for a bishop grows into movement, website

MADISON, Wis. (CNS) – Fifteen years ago, Syte Reitz wouldn't have expected that the prayer bouquet she was preparing for the late Bishop Robert C. Morlino of Madison would take on the life of its own that it did.

That year, the bishop had been facing many difficulties, including the destruction of St. Raphael Cathedral by arson. Reitz thought the bishop could use some prayers and encouragement.

"All I did was start a prayer effort for Bishop Morlino by inviting 30 women from Madison Catholic Woman's Club to sign up for a monthly prayer to cover the bishop every day of the month," she said.

It had been her son, Tom, who'd been studying computer science at University of Wisconsin-Madison, who came up with the idea of building a website: [www.rosaryforthebishop.org](http://www.rosaryforthebishop.org).

"My humble effort to get 30 women to pray immediately expanded to hundreds of people in our diocese, because my college-age son, Tom, had the inspiration and dedication to harness the internet to expand his mom's prayer effort with internet evangelization," Reitz told the Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Diocese of Madison.

For the next several years, the website grew, expanding into an international rosary bouquet that now includes over 477 bishops being prayed for worldwide.

"The program was such a success that more bishops were added. By January 2010, all the United States bishops and the Holy

Father were included,” said Reitz. “Then, the United Kingdom Catholic Herald contacted Rosary for the Bishop with a request to add the U.K. bishops.”

By July of that year, the website included bishops from the U.S., U.K., Netherlands, Germany, Poland, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

“So far, over 853,300 rosaries have been prayed,” Reitz said.

But after a decade and a half of maintaining the website, the time has come to update the website and transition ownership.

“A website like Rosary for the Bishop requires constant updating as bishops are reassigned and new bishops are installed,” said Reitz. “This year, Msgr. (Kevin) Holmes at Madison’s Cathedral Parish agreed to ‘adopt’ the website.”

With this adoption, the site is being updated and a new campaign to promote the site and its mission is being launched to coincide with the 15th anniversary.

Grant McGurn, Cathedral Parish’s communications director and office manager, has done most of the updating work this past year, “and my son did the modernizing of the website for the transition,” said Reitz.

Reitz said she is very excited to have the staff at Cathedral Parish involved in keeping the effort going.

“Our hopes for the new launch is to expand prayer for our bishops in these tumultuous times when prayer and great leadership are so needed,” said Reitz.

“We return to the founding idea of Rosary for the Bishop, inspired by a passage from Exodus 17:11, which refers to Aaron and Hur holding up Moses’ hands during battle, so Moses could have the strength to continue prayer and lead the Israelites to success,” she added.

Reitz described praying for one's bishop as a unifying effort, "which nobody can criticize."

"Whether people absolutely love their bishop or want to criticize their bishop, the unifying solution is to pray for the bishop," she said.

She said one of the things she loves about the website is the map of where people are praying for their bishop. "It's such a visual inspiration to see what power for good the internet can offer."

Reitz said everyone involved in Rosary for the Bishop hopes "many, many people sign up to pray" for Madison Bishop Donald J. Hying "and for many other bishops across the world through this effort, knowing that many are joining them in prayer."

After Bishop Morlino died in November 2018, Bishop Hying was named his successor by Pope Francis April 25, 2019, and he was installed June 25 of that year.

"Our bishops are facing a very challenging time in 2020," Reitz added, "and heaven knows they need our prayers."

The Rosary for the Bishop website, [www.rosaryforthebishop.org](http://www.rosaryforthebishop.org), allows registered users to pledge monthly or weekly rosaries for any bishop listed on the site, which then displays statistics about how many rosaries are being prayed and where. There also is the option to receive email reminders.

Curio is on the staff of the Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Diocese of Madison.