

## **Bishop Walter P. Kellenberg**

First Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre

Bishop Walter P. Kellenberg, one of five children of Conrad and Elizabeth Kellenberg, was born on June 3, 1901 in lower Manhattan. A graduate of St. Anthony of Padua Elementary School in the Bronx, he attended Fordham Prep for a year. Finances forced him to leave, and he worked in a New York City cotton goods store for three years before returning to continue his education at Fordham Prep where he then completed two years of high school work in only one year. He continued his studies at Cathedral College and graduated in 1922. He studied for the priesthood at St. Joseph's Seminary on Dunwoodie, New York.

He was ordained a priest on June 2, 1928 by Patrick Cardinal Hayes in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and was assigned as an assistant pastor to St. Mary's Church in Staten Island where he served from 1928 to 1934. He was transferred to St. Paul's Church in New York City and was assigned duties in the Chancery of the Archdiocese of New York. He also started courses in real estate, insurance and business administration at Columbia University. At the beginning of 1935, Father Kellenberg was transferred to St. Patrick's Cathedral. He was named Assistant Chancellor and Secretary of the Archdiocesan Commission for Real Estate and Insurance in 1939, and became Vice-Chancellor for the Archdiocese in 1941.

In 1943, Father Kellenberg was appointed papal chamberlain to His Holiness, Pope Pius XII with the title Monsignor; he was elevated to Domestic Prelate (prelate of honor) by Pope Pius XII in 1948. Monsignor Kellenberg was appointed Assistant Secretary to Francis Cardinal Spellman in 1946 and eight months later named Secretary to the Cardinal.

Appointed titular bishop of Joannina and auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York on August 25, 1953, he was ordained on October 5, 1953. Less than six months later, on January 19, 1954, he was appointed the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg and was installed on May 27, 1954.

Three years later on April 16, 1957, Bishop Kellenberg learned that he was appointed the founding bishop of a new diocese, the Diocese of Rockville Centre, comprised of Nassau and Suffolk Counties and home to over 500,000 Catholics.

Bishop Kellenberg was installed as the first bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre by his Eminence, Francis Cardinal Spellman, on May 27, 1957 in St. Agnes Cathedral.

A year later Bishop Kellenberg presided in St. Agnes Cathedral at the first ordination of priests for the Diocese of Rockville Centre on May 31, 1958. He had already announced plans to establish St. Pius X Preparatory Seminary in Uniondale, which was dedicated in

its new home in Uniondale on September 3, 1961. In January of 1962, Bishop Kellenberg announced his plans for an official, diocesan newspaper, called The Long Island Catholic, which was published weekly.

In his 19 years leading the diocese, Bishop Kellenberg created the framework for many programs that are still serving the Diocese of Rockville Centre today, including Campus Parish Ministry which serves the academic communities of secular colleges and universities on Long Island. He established 16 new parishes and oversaw the completion of Good Samaritan Hospital and expansions at the three other Catholic facilities; St. Francis Hospital, St. Charles Hospital and Mercy Hospital. The diocesan educational broadcast facility Bishop Kellenberg dedicated in 1970 has grown into the Catholic Faith Network, which reaches millions of households on Long Island and beyond.

Upon receipt of the Holy See's acceptance of his resignation in 1976 at the age of 75, Bishop Kellenberg retired. There were 129 parishes, ten missions, 26 stations and 43 chapels serving over one million Catholics in the Diocese of Rockville Centre at that time.

Bishop Kellenberg suffered a heart attack and died at Mercy Hospital on January 11, 1986.