

Henry Howaniec, OFM Bishop of Almaty, Kazakhstan



It was May 2, 1948 when Fr. Theophane Kalinowski, Provincial Minister received a letter from Henry Howaniec. In the letter Henry wrote, "For a long time I have desired to become a Franciscan priest in order to work for the glory of God by saving souls. I am seventeen years old and in good health. I am a senior at St. Joseph High School and will graduate June 6th. I belong to Sacred Heart Parish. Please send me further information." And so the journey began.

Henry was born on February 14, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois to John and Apolonia (Zdebska) Chowaniec (the spelling of the last name was later changed to Howaniec). He was baptized at St. Casimir Parish, Chicago on April 12, 1931 and so his life long walk with the Lord began. He attended Sacred Heart Elementary School and St. Joseph High School, both in Chicago's Back of the Yards.

After his letter of request was received by Fr. Theophane, Henry entered the Franciscans of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Pulaski, Wisconsin in 1948, receiving the religious name, Theophil. He professed solemn vows on August 15, 1952 and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Vincent Brizgys, the Ordinary for Lithuanians living in the United States, on June 14, 1956, at Christ the King Seminary, West Chicago, Illinois.

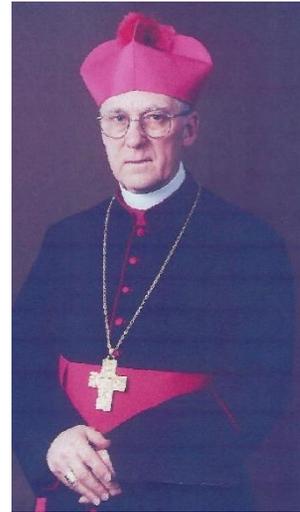
His first assignment following his studies at Christ the King Seminary was to the Assumption Friary, Pulaski, Wisconsin as Circulation Manager as well as professor and confessor at St. Joseph Vocational School. In 1959 Fr. Theophane, Provincial Minister, transferred Fr. Theophil to Queen of Peace Friary, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin as assistant historian and provincial chronicler. During this time he pursued studies at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and was also given the option of returning to his baptismal name, Henry. He was one of the first three members of the Sacer Recessus (contemplative House of Prayer). In 1961 Fr. Henry was transferred to Green Bay, Wisconsin and began his ministry as chaplain at St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay. He was also named editor of Chronicle of the ABVM Province. In 1967 Fr. Henry made his way to our General Curia, Rome, Italy where he assumed his new responsibilities in the offices of the General Secretary, Protocol, and Translations. While in Rome he studied at the Antonianum, and at the Christian Russian Center in Bergamo, Italy.

In 1993 Fr. Henry was missioned to Kazakhstan and engaged in pastoral ministry in Almaty, the ancient capital of Kazakhstan, where five friars served the church in

various activities, including pastoral care, management of an orphanage, preparation for and administration of the sacraments and medical services by one friar in a small clinic. Kazakhstan, an independent country in northwest central Asia bordering the Caspian Sea, was a constituent republic in the former Soviet Union from 1936 to 1991.

The new Apostolic Administration of Almaty was erected on July 7, 1999, and includes four regions: Northern Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Pavlodar and Akmola covering a territory of 576,000 square miles with a population of 4.3 million, mostly Muslims and Russian Orthodox.

Fr. Henry was named head of the Apostolic Administration of Almaty on September 26, 1999 and named Bishop of Almaty with a titular see of Acolla on October 18, 2000. On November 26, 2000 Fr. Henry Howaniec was ordained bishop of Almaty by Archbishop Arian Oles, Apostolic Nuncio to Kazakhstan in the Cathedral Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Almaty.



At his ordination as bishop, Henry wrote, "My greatest joy was the presence of five members of my home Province, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province in Pulaski, Wisconsin, who came from so far away to participate in my Episcopal Ordination. "

In a letter sent to Fr. Thomas Luczak, Provincial Minister, on May 22, 2002, Bishop Henry wrote, "The Holy Father named me the spiritual shepherd of the new Almaty Apostolic Administration, and, on November 26, 2000, I was ordained a bishop. Despite this new role of service to the Universal Church, I remain a Franciscan, and pray that the Franciscan Order may some day be firmly implanted in this land."

Bishop Henry left Kazakhstan for the United States to renew his visa with the intention of returning to Almaty. He became ill and was never able to realize his dream. His last days were spent at the Milwaukee Catholic Home where he embraced Sister Death on Good Friday, March 30, 2018, in the 87th year of his life, the 66th year of his religious profession, the 62nd year of his priestly ordination and the 17th year of his episcopal ordination.

Mass of Christian Burial celebrated at St. Clare Parish, Wind Lake, Wisconsin, Wednesday, April 4, 2018. Burial at the ABVM Provincial Cemetery, Pulaski, Wisconsin.

May the soul of our brother, Henry, rest in the peace of Christ, Amen.