



## The Most Reverend Frederick B. Henry



**The Most Reverend Frederick Bernard Henry, D.D.  
Fourth Bishop of Thunder Bay, 11 May 1995–19 March 1998**

The Most Reverend Frederick Bernard Henry became the fourth Bishop of Thunder Bay at a time when governments in Canada were preoccupied with cutting deficits, balancing budgets, and lowering taxes. To many, these draconian measures were long overdue and considered fiscally responsible. To religious leaders like Bishop Henry, however, they exacerbated an already deplorable state of unemployment, homelessness, child poverty, and labour unrest in Canadian cities. During his brief sojourn at the helm of the Thunder Bay Diocese, he spoke out often and eloquently in defence of the disadvantaged and marginalized. "I never perceived myself as an agent for social justice", wrote Bishop Henry in the Thunder Bay *Chronicle-Journal*. "But the poor and unfortunate have no voice. So I think of what Jesus would do for them and he would speak up. I have a voice - so I do."

Frederick Bernard Henry was born on 11 April 1943 in London, Ontario, the eldest of four sons born to Leo and Noreen Henry. In Southwestern Ontario, his elementary and secondary years of catholic education were unbroken as he attended St Joseph, St Peter, and Holy Rosary elementary schools. He was a graduate of London's Catholic Central High School and the Sacred Heart Junior Seminary in Delaware, Ontario. In 1961, he entered St Peter Seminary in London and seven years later (25 May 1968) was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop G. Emmett Carter for the Roman Catholic Diocese of London.

Father Frederick Henry's one year as associate pastor of Christ the King Parish in Windsor was followed by further studies in philosophy and theology. In 1970 he entered the University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, Indiana) and graduated three years later with a Master of Arts degree in philosophy. He continued his post-graduate studies at the Gregorian University in Rome where he earned a Licentiate in theology.

He now seemed destined to assume an academic post at a Catholic Canadian theological college. From 1974 to 1981 he was on the faculty of St Peter Seminary in London followed by four years as its Rector. Perhaps his most important contribution to this institution was the supervision of an expansion of its library facilities and the initiation of an accreditation process which ultimately led to the seminary's membership in the Association of Theological Schools in Canada. While Rector of St Peter's, he was made an "Honourary Prelate" on 18 April 1985 with the title Monsignor. After a decade in academia, Monsignor Henry was ordained a bishop on 24 June 1986 in Saint Peter's Cathedral Basilica. He became Auxiliary Bishop to the Most Reverend John Sherlock, Bishop of London and took up residence in Windsor, Ontario.

Bishop Henry was drawn out of the Southwestern Ontario that he loved so much

when His Holiness Pope John Paul II named him Bishop of Thunder Bay on 24 March 1995. He took possession of the diocese on Thursday, 11 May 1995 during the installation ceremonies in St Patrick's Cathedral led by His Excellency Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic, Archbishop of Toronto. For the next two-and-a-half years the Roman Catholics in the Thunder Bay Diocese came to know Bishop Henry as a man of decisive action and as a champion of social justice. His letters to the editor and feature articles appeared with remarkable frequency in the Thunder Bay *Chronicle-Journal*. He argued against the establishment of a charity casino in the city, deplored the impact deficit reductions had on child poverty and single mothers, supported teachers' rights to protest over the Ontario Government's Bill 160 which removed legitimate working conditions from negotiations and supported the right of nurses not to assist doctors who performed abortions. His letters appeared so frequently in the *Chronicle-Journal* that he was periodically given space as a guest columnist.

Bishop Henry made a lasting contribution to the Thunder Bay Diocese by having a new coat of arms designed, by initiating the construction of a mausoleum at St Andrew's Cemetery, and by canonically erecting an additional native parish in the diocese in 1996. (Kitchitwa Kateri Anamewgamik)

***Source:*** Roy Piovesana, *Hope and Charity: An Illustrated History of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Thunder Bay* (2002), pp. 270-276)