

BIOGRAPHY OF REV. MONSIGNOR MICHAEL J. MOTTA, D. MIN.

Michael Joseph Motta was born on Thursday, November 7, 1946 at 8:16 PM at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, Connecticut.

His parents were Helen (nee Naruk) Motta (b. 9/4/1926 - d. 4/15/88) and Sebastian "Mike" Motta (b. 9/2/1923 - d. 9/19/2015) who had been married in Middletown, Connecticut on 11/22/1945.

Monsignor Motta has one sibling, a younger brother, Timothy Motta, born in 1949.

At the time of his birth, his parents lived in a two-family home with his maternal grandparents in Middletown.

When Monsignor was 4 years old, his family moved to Plainville, Connecticut. Kindergarteners had to be age 5 by September 1st, but Monsignor would not be 5 until November so he did not attend school until the following year. His mother met with the school superintendent to argue that her son should be placed in the first grade, telling the principal "He's already done Kindergarten."

It was in 5th grade in Southington that Monsignor had his first male teacher. Most teachers at that time were women.

Monsignor's maternal grandfather spoke very favorably to his grandson about the Catholic church. The eldest brother of this grandfather, who had been born in Poland, had been sent to Siberia, and his mother died shortly thereafter, so distressed was she at her son's appearance after his ordeal. The grandfather's family lived in a Polish town close to the Russian border.

Monsignor spent 1 year at Southington High School. He wanted to attend a Catholic high school but there was no such school in Southington. So in his sophomore year, at age 14, in 1961, he started at the St. Thomas Seminary high school in Bloomfield, Connecticut. The Seminary had opened in 1897 under Bishop Michael Tierney. The Rt. Rev. Monsignor. John J. Byrnes was Rector of the school. Sixteen priests were teachers. The curriculum was very difficult and it seemed to Monsignor that all the students there were very smart. Monsignor's mother told him to do his best.

The Seminary school involved a six-year curriculum: 4 years of high school then 2 years of college to achieve an Associates Degree. Young men from all over the United States attended the school. When Monsignor completed his studies in high school, there were 25 high school borders, 50 day students and 80 who graduated with Associates Degrees at the collegiate level.

Monsignor considered the college years to be easier than high school.

In the Archdiocese of Hartford, the Archbishop determines where the graduates from the St. Thomas Seminary school program attend the last two years of college and 4 years of the study of theology in seminary. In 1966, when Monsignor graduated with an Associates' Degree from St. Thomas Seminary, the Most Rev. Henry J. O'Brien was the Archbishop of Hartford. Archbishop O'Brien met with the young Michael Motta and told him he was going to Mount St. Mary's College. The Bishop asked Michael if he knew where the college was located. Michael replied no he did not. The Bishop said "Well, neither do I so get a map!"

The College is in Emmitsburg, Maryland and was founded in 1808 by French émigré Father John DuBois. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, joined Fr. DuBois there in 1809. Fr. DuBois became the Bishop of New York.

Four other graduates of St. Thomas Seminary — classmates of Monsignor's — were sent there with Michael Motta. Of the 5 who were sent to Emmitsburg, 2 eventually quit and 3 achieved graduation - including Michael Motta.

Students were tested on every possible subject to qualify for admission to the College. A retreat was provided to the applicants. For a full week, no talking was allowed among the applicants. Then an "Emmitsburg Assembly" was conducted. Applicants were assembled in a group and exposed to brilliantly bright lights but it was big prank joke conducted by older students. Monsignor George Mulcahy, the Rector of the College, announced to the stunned students that everyone would pass the test and there was great relief.

Father Harry J. Flynn was initially the Dean and thereafter was Vice-Rector and Seminary Rector at the College, and was Monsignor's favorite teacher there. Father Flynn became Bishop of Lafayette, Louisiana and then Archbishop of St. Paul - Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Father Motta's first assignment after ordination to the Diaconate in 1971 was to St. Mary Church in New Britain, Connecticut.

On May 27, 1972, Michael Motta was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford at a Mass at St. Joseph's Cathedral. In 1972 there were approximately 650 ordained priests serving churches in the Archdiocese of Hartford.

After his priestly ordination in 1972, he was assigned to Holy Spirit Church in Newington, Connecticut and served that parish for 6 years as Assistant Pastor.

In 1975, Fr. Motta started to play golf which has become a life long enjoyment for him. He has had 7 "holes-in-one" over the years:

- His 1st hole-in-one was in 1983 at the University of Notre Dame, in South Bend, Indiana
- He had a hole-in-one in 1983 and another one in 1984, at the Wethersfield Country Club
- He had two holes-in-one on the 13th and 17th holes in one game in 1990, played at the Wethersfield Country Club in Connecticut.
- Two other holes-in-one were at golf courses in San Antonio in Texas and in Florida.

Fr. Motta served on the Priests' Personnel Board of the Archdiocese of Hartford from 1975 to 1978.

In 1978, he served 6 weeks at St. Frances Cabrini church in North Haven, Connecticut.

Fr. Motta served two and a half years (1978 - 1980) as Assistant Pastor at St. Patrick Church in Enfield, Connecticut.

In the 1970s, there were so many priests in the Archdiocese that there was a "rule" that priests had to serve for 28 years before they could become Pastors of a parish church. Eventually, a new rule was promulgated that priests could be assigned in Ministry Teams as "Co-Pastors."

Father Motta was assigned to the ministry team at St. James Church in Rocky Hill with Fr. Ed O'Brien. Fr. Motta reported for this assignment on his birthday, November 7th in 1980.

Fr. Motta served on the Senate of Priests, Executive Board, Archdiocese of Hartford starting in 1981.

In 1983, Father Motta had a 3 month sabbatical to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

Also, from 1978 - 1983, Father Motta attended the Hartford Seminary and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree. His dissertation was on new ways of designing and providing religious education and he also wrote a play entitled "*From the Garden to the Crib.*" The play was performed 5 times in each of the next 2 years (1982 and 1983), was covered by articles in two newspapers and was attended by hundreds of people. Father Motta was the first Roman Catholic to be awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree from this Seminary.

Monsignor met and worked with Sister Maria Toce while both were assigned to St. James parish in Rocky Hill. She later became the first woman to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Hartford Seminary.

Father O'Brien, the Co-Pastor of St. James, left for television ministry. After his departure, Fr. Louis Cremonie joined Fr. Motta at St. James. On Easter Sunday after the noon Mass, Fr. Cremonie suffered a debilitating stroke. Fr. Motta was then assigned to be the Pastor of St. James. Fr. Eugene Torpey, a retired priest, assisted Fr. Motta for a time, then Fr. Andre Morin — a newly ordained priest — was assigned to St. James also, to assist.

In 1991, the Most Reverend Daniel Anthony Cronin became Archbishop of Hartford. After his installation as Archbishop in 1992, he sought a new Director of Religious Education (DRE). The current DRE, Fr. Belval, had served in that position for over 20 years. Fr. Motta's mother Helen had died in 1988 at age 61 from breast cancer and Monsignor credits her prayers from heaven in helping him become the new DRE. Archbishop Cronin gave Fr. Motta a 3 year term as DRE, telling Fr. Motta that if he still liked Fr. Motta after that time, he'd give Fr. Motta an additional 3 year DRE term. Fr. Motta's father mistakenly thought that the DRE position was a demotion and did not understand how important an assignment it was within the Archdiocese. The position required regular meetings with the Archbishop.

Fr. Motta served as DRE for 11 years under Archbishop Cronin and for 10 years under Archbishop Henry Mansell, for a total of 21 years.

While Fr. Motta was serving as DRE, he implemented the Catholic Biblical School (CBS), a comprehensive 4-year program of study to form adult students in understanding and interpreting the Bible for pastoral leadership. The program prepares individuals seeking deeper theological knowledge, both for personal spiritual enrichment and for preparation for ministry in the Church, and continues to this day. In 2010, the State of Connecticut Department of Higher Education began to award CBS students 18 undergraduate college credits upon completion of the course.

As DRE, Fr. Motta also organized 2 guided tours of the Holy Land (2010 and 2011) as well as a tour to Turkey and a tour covering the Travels of St. Paul (which involved both cruise and land segments). These trips were in addition to a trip to the Holy Land with his parents in 1980.

In August 1993, Denver, Colorado hosted the World Youth Day (WYD). WYD was founded by Pope John Paul II in 1985 and has been held every 2 or 3 years since. It was the 1st time a WYD was held in either North America or an English-speaking nation. The theme chosen by Pope John Paul II was "*I came that they might have life and have it abundantly*" from the Gospel of John. Over 1 million people were in attendance. Father Motta had hired Ms. Patricia Keck at St. James parish to lead the Youth Ministry program there and also serve the Archdiocesan DRE program. Ms. Keck assisted F. Motta in planning the Archdiocesan delegations participation in the World Youth Day in Denver. Connecticut's delegation included 350 youth and 3 Bishops — Archbishop Cronin, and Bishops Rosazza and Loverde.

In 2000, a Jubilee Year, Father Motta was made a Monsignor, known officially as a "*Prelate of Honor of His Holiness.*" The process entails a nomination by the Archbishop for consideration by the Pope in Rome. The designation of "Monsignor" is reserved for those who have distinguished themselves by providing exceptional service to the church. All Monsignors all over the world are considered to be officially part of the papal household, whether they serve the Vatican in Rome or elsewhere. Monsignor Motta was made Monsignor in August of 2000 but was not told of the news until All Hallows's Eve (10/31/2000) some months later. He has special clothing — cassock and surplice — to commemorate this special occasion.

In 2002, Monsignor Motta attended another World Youth Day (WYD), this time hosted by Toronto, Canada, July 23 - 28. Youth from 172 nations around the world attended. 850,000 people attended the concluding Papal Mass celebrated by 81-year old Pope John Paul II. The theme of the 2002 event was "*You are the salt of the earth ... (Y)ou are the light of the world.*" It was the last WYD attended by Pope John Paul II, who died in April 2005.

In 2003, Archbishop Cronin told Monsignor Motta that he would be assigned to a parish as Pastor in addition to the responsibilities he had as DRE. Monsignor became the Pastor at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in West Hartford, with Fr. Michael Whyte, a newly ordained priest. Fr. Whyte was later reassigned to St. Catherine of Sienna in Simsbury, leaving Monsignor Motta as the sole priest at St. Mark the Evangelist Church.

In 2008, Monsignor asked Archbishop Mansell if he could go to Rome to study there. Monsignor Schmitz was the Vicar of the Archdiocese of Hartford at that time. Archbishop Mansell initially hesitated to approve Monsignor's request but eventually agreed. Monsignor studied at The Pontifical North American College in Vatican City in Rome from August 2008 to Thanksgiving 2008. There, he conducted an in-depth review of theology at the College's Institute of Continuing Theological Education, and spent a one week Retreat at Assisi. The studies included modules in discernment and preaching.

Bishops in the United States are members of the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and have two meetings per year. Region I is New England. For 4 years, Monsignor Motta was appointed by Archbishop Cronin to be the Priest Representative for Region I to the USCCB.

In 2010, Monsignor Motta received the *Sapientia et Doctrina* Award from Fordham University (the university's motto for wisdom and knowledge) for Leadership in Religious Education. This award recognized his leadership in promoting devotion to God's Word in New England, as essential to the thriving success of the Hartford Catholic Biblical School for more than fifteen years since its creation.

In 2013, Archbishop Mansell nominated Monsignor Motta to become a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher, which was solemnized in an investiture ceremony at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City to confer knighthood upon the newly inducted. These Knights are a Catholic, secular, chivalric confraternity, founded at the time of the First Crusade in 1099 A.D., by the leader of the Crusades, Godfrey de Bouillon, who had liberated Jerusalem from Muslim control. The Knights are under the protection of the Holy See in Rome. The mission of the Knights is to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land. There are some 30,000 Knights today in Lieutenancies (local divisions) around the world.

Archbishop Mansell retired in 2013 but before his retirement, he ended Monsignor Motta's assignment as DRE in which Monsignor had served the Archdiocese for 21 years under two Archbishops.

In 2013, Monsignor Motta was assigned to St. Mary Star of the Sea in Unionville, replacing Fr. John Golas. Monsignor Motta began his ministry at St. Mary Star of the Sea on July 15, 2013.

Monsignor loves St. Mary Star of the Sea and feels very blessed by the wonderful parishioners here. He is very much loved and appreciated by so many. The parishioners are very blessed to be part of Monsignor's last parish assignment as Pastor.

Monsignor will celebrate his 50th anniversary of Ordination in May 2022. He will retire effective November 1, 2021 upon the occasion of his 75th birthday in November, after which he will be a Senior Status priest for the Archdiocese.

Monsignor's last Masses celebrated at St. Mary's will be the weekend of October 30th and 31st, 2021.

There will be an afternoon reception Retirement Party to bid Monsignor farewell, show him appreciation for his priestly service over nearly 50 years, and wish him well in what will hopefully be a rewarding, fulfilling, long and happy retirement. The reception event will be held at St. Mary Star of the Sea, 145 Main Street, Unionville, CT on Sunday, November 14, 2021 at 2:00 PM. RSVP requested, please see parish Bulletins during the month of October 2021 for more information: <http://stmary-unionville.org/bulletins.php>

In retirement, Monsignor Motta will be living at The Pastoral Center, 467 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002.

1971	St. Mary Church (<i>as an ordained Deacon</i>)	New Britain
1972	Holy Spirit Church (<i>1st church assignment as an ordained Priest</i>)	Newington
1978	St. Frances Cabrini Church (<i>for 6 weeks to help a priest who was convalescing from illness</i>)	New Haven
1978 - 1980	St. Patrick Church	Enfield
1980 - 1992	St. James Church	Rocky Hill
1983	Notre Dame University (<i>sabbatical</i>)	South Bend, Indiana
1978 - 1983	Hartford Seminary (<i>Doctor of Ministry degree</i>)	Hartford

1992 - 2013	Director of Religious Education for the Archdiocese; administered the Hartford Biblical School	Hartford
1993	World Youth Day	Denver, Colorado
2000	Was made a Monsignor	by the Holy Father, Saint John Paul II
2002	World Youth Day	Toronto, Canada
2003 - 2013	St. Mark the Evangelist Church	West Hartford
2008	Pontifical North American College	Rome, Italy
2010	<i>Sapientia et Doctrina</i> Award	Fordham University, New York
2013	<i>Knight of Holy Sepulcher</i> investiture	St. Patrick Cathedral, New York City
2013 - 2021	St. Mary Star of the Sea	Unionville