

# **Statement on the death of Cardinal William H. Keeler from Most Reverend William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore**

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One of the great blessings in my life was coming to know Cardinal Keeler. I met him years ago when he was the Bishop of Harrisburg and I was serving as priest-secretary to Cardinal Hickey in Washington. As I listened to him describe what he was doing in Harrisburg and in the field of ecumenism, I was deeply impressed by his graciousness coupled with his energy and vision.

Soon thereafter he became Archbishop of Baltimore and I had the privilege of accompanying Cardinal Hickey when he visited Cardinal Keeler. There I learned of his prowess as a Church historian coupled with his deep love and respect for the history and heritage of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. I saw this firsthand when he hosted a dinner in his residence and held us spellbound as he gave us insight into the history of the Church in Baltimore.

Later when I became a bishop and a member of the episcopal conference, I learned of the respect and esteem in which he was held by his brother bishops and his leadership in Jewish-Catholic relations and in Orthodox-Catholic relations – the latter of which was crowned by the visit of Patriarch Bartholomew to Baltimore.

Upon becoming Archbishop of Baltimore, I became more aware than ever of his tremendous ministry in the City of Baltimore and in the nine Maryland counties that comprise the Archdiocese. Just to name three of them, I think of the wonderful visit of Pope St. John Paul II to Baltimore in 1995, the restoration of the Basilica of the Assumption and the creation of Partners in

Excellence which has helped thousands of young people from disadvantaged neighborhoods to receive a sound Catholic education.

When I would visit the Cardinal at the Little Sisters of the Poor, I gave him a report on my stewardship and told him many times that we were striving to build upon his legacy – a legacy that greatly strengthened the Church and the wider community. After a time the Cardinal could no longer respond but I am confident that he is aware that he goes to God held aloft by the faith, the love, and the prayers of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore and many others throughout the United States and far beyond.

Cardinal Keeler will be greatly missed. I am grateful to the Little Sisters for their devoted care for the Cardinal. May his noble priestly soul rest in peace!