

Msgr. Dr. Valentin Pozaić: in memoriam

16 May 2023

Msgr. Dr. Valentin Pozaić, a founder and the first ecclesiastical assistant of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society and a former ecclesiastical assistant of the FEAMC (1996-2016), has died. (September 15, 1945-May 15, 2023)

With a heavy heart, we announce the death of **Msgr. Dr. Valentin Pozaić**, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Zagreb, on May 15, 2023, at the age of seventy-seven in the fiftieth year of his priesthood and the nineteenth year of his episcopate. Msgr. Pozaić was also a founder and the first ecclesiastical assistant of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society.

He was born on September 15, 1945, in Selnica, the parish of Marija Bistrica. At the end of his second year at the Archdiocesan Gymnasium in Zagreb, he joined the Society of Jesus, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1973. He began his studies in philosophy and theology at the Institute of Philosophy and Theology of the Society of Jesus in Zagreb, which he continued at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned a baccalaureate in moral theology in 1975 and a doctorate in 1984. Upon returning to Zagreb, he taught moral theology and Christian ethics at the Institute of Philosophy and Theology of the Society of Jesus and founded the Center for Bioethics. He furthered his education and engaged in research at the Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute of Ethics in Washington, D.C., the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics in London and the Institut Borja de Bioètica in Barcelona. From 1990 to 1994, he taught bioethics at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

On February 2, 2005, Pope John Paul II appointed him Titular Bishop of Petina and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Zagreb. His episcopal ordination took place on March 19, 2005, in the Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary in Zagreb. On May 13, 2017, the Apostolic Nunciature in Zagreb announced that Pope Francis had accepted Msgr. Pozaić's resignation from the office of Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Zagreb due to health reasons.

Until the earthquake in Zagreb on March 22, 2020, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Pozaić chose to reside at the College of the Society of Jesus in Zagreb, where he had served as rector from 1994 to 2000. After the earthquake, he moved to the St. Joseph Home for Retired Priests in Zagreb.

In 1991, together with a group of physicians, pharmacists and university professors, he founded the Croatian Catholic Medical Society, serving as its first ecclesiastical assistant until his retirement in 2018. In addition, from 1996 to 2016, he was the ecclesiastical assistant of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FEAMC), in which he was esteemed as "prepared, cordial, mild, clear, faithful to the Magisterium of the Church and the Pope," according to Prof. Vincenzo Defilippis, President of FEAMC. Bishop Pozaić's last encounter with the members of the international organizations of FEAMC and FIAMC (the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations) took place during the Twenty-Fifth Congress of the FIAMC, which was held in Zagreb from May 30 to June 2, 2018.

Bishop Pozaić, i.e., Pater Pozaić (as we called him until his episcopal ordination), was not only our ecclesiastical assistant but also the key figure in the founding of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society, its organization and the determination of its fundamental directions regarding development and activities. Moreover, in addition to his formal obligations in the Society, he was like a caring father to many of our members, following not only our formation as Catholic physicians and pharmacists but also our professional careers and family lives. He married many of our members, baptized our children, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation, visited us in our homes, ministered to our loved ones, and provided us with spiritual advice as well as paternal affection.

Since 2018, when illness compelled him to resign from the position of our ecclesiastical assistant, we saw him less frequently. Nevertheless, every encounter was an occasion of joy and happiness. We were together on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Croatian Catholic Medical Association, when he celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Zagreb. He also joined us at the Assembly of our Society held at the National Shrine of our Lady of Maria Bistrica on September 25, 2021, when he was proclaimed an honorary member of the Society for his exceptional contribution to the establishment and work of the Society in the promotion of Christian principles within healthcare.

His episcopal motto, *Elige vitam!—Choose life!*, clearly expressed his life's mission, which he incorporated into the Statutes of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society: the protection of human life from conception to natural death. In a symbolic manner, he also expressed this message on the occasion of his episcopal ordination in 2005 on the Feast of St. Joseph, the patron saint of fathers and the Croatian homeland, when one of the Mass readings was read by a member of our Society, Dr. Renata Vrsalović, at the time nine months pregnant with her

son Jakov.

Our Bishop (Pater) Pozaić left us a great legacy: the love of God, the love of our fellow man and the love of our homeland, but also the quest for the sincere and compassionate care of our patients, fraternal love for our colleagues and faith in the progress of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society and the international associations of Catholic physicians.

*Eternal rest grant him, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon him!
Rest in peace!*

Rok Čivljak
President of the Croatian Catholic Medical Society