

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Monsignor Thomas Barrett Armstrong 1929-2009**  
**Catholic Community Mourns the Passing of Director of Music, Teacher and Friend**

**Toronto (November 16, 2009)** Monsignor Thomas Barrett Armstrong, a priest of the Archdiocese of Toronto, a graduate of St. Michael's Choir School, and former Director of Music of the world renowned institution, passed away on Saturday, November 14, 2009.

In 1942, Monsignor Armstrong came to St. Michael's Choir School as a student, where he received his early training in music. After completing studies in philosophy and theology at St. Augustine's Seminary, he was ordained a priest in 1955. He continued studies at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome, under the tutelage of Monsignor Domenico Bartolucci, the conductor of the Sistine Chapel Choir and Dom Cardine, eminent Gregorian scholar from Solesmes. While in Rome he obtained Licentiate Degrees in Gregorian Chant and Sacred Composition.

He returned to the Choir School in 1958, working closely with the founder and director, Monsignor John Edward Ronan. In 1962 he succeeded Monsignor Ronan as Director of Music for St. Michael's Cathedral and Choral Director at the Choir School.

As a dedicated and selfless teacher and choir director from 1958 to 2004, Monsignor Armstrong engendered a love for music in the hearts of thousands of students who passed through St. Michael's Choir School. Many of his students went on to careers in music, either in the service of the church, in education, in composition, or on the concert stage. Humour was a constant element in his teaching style, the pun being a favourite device.

In his 40 year tenure as Director of Music, he regularly conducted the choirs at St. Michael's Cathedral, as well as in concerts, recordings and tours across Canada, United States, the Caribbean and Europe. He composed a wide range of music for the liturgy, overseeing music for the National Televised Daily Mass and composing a setting of the psalm for every day of the two-year cycle of daily readings.

Monsignor Armstrong was, above all, an exemplary priest, whose devout Catholic faith was reflected in every facet of life. He remained ever generous to the needy and underprivileged, including many years supporting the pro-life movement. He was awarded the Papal medal "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" in 1987; the Catholic High School Commission's Award of Merit in 1990; and was invested as a Prelate of Honour (Monsignor) in 1992.

In addition to his work at the Choir School, Monsignor Armstrong served on the national committee which produced the first and second Catholic Book of Worship. He was actively involved with the Knights of Columbus and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. In September 2002, Monsignor Armstrong received the Queen's Jubilee Medal for his contribution to music in Canada. He was named Conductor Emeritus of the choir in 2003, and retired in 2004. At the time of his death Monsignor was living at the Houses of Providence in Scarborough.

He is survived by sisters-in-law Mary and Rita Armstrong, and nieces/nephews Denis, Peter, Matthew & Elizabeth; Sharon, Frances, Paul & Julie; Cathy & John. He will be dearly missed by all alumni, staff, parents, parishioners, and fellow clergy. Donations towards *The Gift of Monsignor T. Barrett Armstrong* may be made online at [www.smcs.on.ca](http://www.smcs.on.ca) or by calling St. Michael's Choir School at 416-397-6367.

**Visitation and funeral details are as follows:**

Wednesday, November 18, 2009 – St. Michael's Cathedral  
2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Rite of Reception and Office of Readings  
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Visitation (prayers at 7:00 p.m.)

Thursday, November 19, 2009 – 10:00 a.m. - St. Michael's Cathedral – Funeral Mass

-30-

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Katheryn Trainor  
Administrative Director, St. Michael's Choir School

[katheryn.trainor@tcdsb.org](mailto:katheryn.trainor@tcdsb.org)

T: 416-397-6367

F: 416-363-0710