Bishop Flynn ‘brought community together...’

By Bill Decker
Staff Writer

Bishop Harry Flynn arrived in Lafayette during bad times. But Flynn will leave to the sound of praise for his work on behalf of the needy.

“He’s been very helpful to the poor here in Acadiana,” said Sister Patricia Cairns, whom Flynn asked to run Lafayette Catholic Service Centers Inc. “He’ll be sorely missed.”

“He has lifted the image of the diocese,” said Protestant clergyman Francis Martin, president of the Lafayette Ministerial Alliance. “I think the biggest thing he’s done is bring the community together.”

Flynn has been appointed as the successor to Archbishop John Roach of Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Flynn will be installed in St. Paul on April 27. He became a coadjutor bishop in Lafayette in 1986.

“I'm very, very sad today for the Diocese of Lafayette,” said Madlyn Boustany, an organizer for the Bishop’s Charity Ball fund-raiser. “But I feel happy for Minnesota. They’re going to get a great archbishop.”

Boustany called Flynn “a very holy man” who “truly loves the poor. That’s what he should always be remembered for.”

The eight agencies operated by the Catholic Service Centers are now among the area’s biggest shelters for the homeless as well as distributors of food, utility-bill assistance and other help for the poor.

“We have had his support 100 percent in our growth,” Cairns said. “He has a deep concern for the poor, no matter their race or their color or their creed.”

“He did what he was supposed to do — pull the community together,” said Martin, who leads the non-denominational Family Life Christian Fellowship congregation in Scott.

He also praised Flynn’s commitment to the Lafayette Coalition Against Pornography and to opposing abortion.

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Mayor Kenny Bowen called Flynn “a great shepherd” who “led by example and was kind, gentle and loving. Who could ask for anything more?”

From Monsignor Glen Provost, vicar of the Lafayette Region: “Throughout the diocese he has left his mark in his concern for the poor, the underprivileged; in his love for Catholic education and social justice, with his desire to teach and his unflagging support of respect for human life.”

From Monsignor A.O. Sigur, vicar general: Pope John Paul II has again “called upon the remarkable talents and zeal of Bishop Harry Flynn.

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