

No Headline

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The Rev. Victor Salandini, a Roman Catholic priest who was a spiritual leader to Cesar Chavez and others in the farm workers movement and who served as research director of the United Farm Workers, died on Tuesday at the home of his sister Louise Roccoforte in this town near San Diego. He was 66.

The cause was liver cancer, said the funeral home handling arrangements for the family.

Father Salandini joined the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in 1965 and spent the next 29 years, until just before his death, walking the union's picket lines and taking part in its marches. The Tortilla Priest

By 1971 he had become known as the Tortilla Priest, for his use of corn tortillas to minister Communion in the fields to striking farm workers. Asked by the Diocese of San Diego to explain that practice, which had not been authorized, he said he had run out of the customary wafers of unleavened bread.

In response, and also because he had refused to wear traditional vestments while offering Mass, the diocese suspended him. He was reinstated two weeks later, after pledging to discontinue the use of tortillas and to remove the union's symbol, a black eagle, from his vestments.

Nevertheless he embraced his newfound nickname and 20 years later wrote a book about his experiences, "The Confessions of a Tortilla Priest."

His death came less than four months after he had completed a 343-mile march through central California in support of the union.

Father Salandini, a native of Port Angeles, Wash., entered the priesthood in San Diego in 1952. He retired two years ago.

He is survived by his mother, Giovanna Salandini of Escondido, and three sisters, Mrs. Roccoforte and Mary Molina and Rosi Pedersen, both of Long Beach, Calif.