

A bride, a groom and a nervous Father Hector



Between 1977 and 1995, my parents welcomed 17 grandchildren. My wife Mary and I will host that extended family the day after Christmas, adding to the joy of a year that saw three of those McMullen grandkids get married.

The last of the three weddings occurred Oct. 30, at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg. My nephew Sean and his bride, Jamie, met on campus, as undergrads. Before playing soccer for the Mount, Sean grew up in St. Bernadette Parish in Severn, and attended Monsignor Slade School and Archbishop Spalding High. Jamie came up through Sacred Heart in Glyndon, then Mount de Sales Academy. Their wedding included a priest who wanted the ceremony to be just right.

Father Hector Mateus-Ariza, the associate pastor of St. John, Westminster, is a graduate of the Mount seminary. Sean and Jamie's wedding was his first visit to the chapel since June 2009, when he had been ordained at the Cathedral in Baltimore.

"I've celebrated a number of weddings, but this was my first one at the Mount chapel," Father Hector said. "During Sean and Jamie's wedding, I remembered my time at the seminary, and there were mixed emotions. I remember being seated at the back of the chapel in 2002, when I first came to Emmitsburg."

A native of Colombia in South America, Father Hector came to the U.S. with minimal experience with our native tongue. At several points in the wedding, he apologized for his English, but his sincerity speaks volumes.

"Sean and Jamie, this couple ... what I love the most is the care they put into including their families," he said. "I could sense how important the sacraments are to them. It was an important part of their beginning. I wanted to make sure it was good."

Mission accomplished.