

‘A walk down memory lane’ : Archdiocese of Baltimore bids farewell to Bishop Rozanski

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Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski was greeted by a sea of familiar faces as he processed up the long aisle of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland at the start of a July 13 Mass of thanksgiving for his 30 years of service in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Family members, classmates from Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School in Essex, parishioners from churches he served, friends from the Catholic Center and hundreds of others all gathered to show their appreciation to the native Baltimorean – some of them reaching out to shake the auxiliary bishop’s hand or pat his shoulder as he passed by.

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It was a powerful moment for Bishop Rozanski, who is preparing to leave his native archdiocese to become the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Mass. He will be installed in his new diocese Aug. 12.

“I remarked coming down the aisle,” Bishop Rozanski told the assembly, “that it was like taking a walk down memory lane.”

In his homily, Bishop Rozanski said “bittersweet” is a word that could not totally summarize his feelings about leaving Baltimore, a city where he was raised in the faith at Holy Rosary in Fells Point and Sacred Heart of Mary in Graceland Park.

“You have taught me so much of what it means to be a shepherd for God’s people in so many ways,” he said.

Bishop Rozanski noted that during moments of prayer, in celebrations of confirmations and parish anniversaries and in various meetings and parish visitations, he “found grace-filled moments.”

At the end of the Mass, Bishop Rozanski offered special thanks to Archbishop William E. Lori, Bishop William C. Newman and Bishop Denis J. Madden – each of whom embraced their friend as the congregation offered sustained applause.

Earlier in the day, Archbishop Lori presented a pectoral cross to Bishop Rozanski as a gift.

The religious symbol was a duplicate of one worn by St. John Paul II when he was archbishop of Krakow and then pope. Bishop Rozanski said he will wear the cross as a reminder of the affection of the archbishop and the people of the archdiocese. It is also a reminder of his Catholic faith and Polish heritage that “go hand in hand,” he said.

Archbishop Lori joked that the reason Baltimore experienced a long, snowy winter was to get Bishop Rozanski ready for New England.

“I just hope and pray we’ll hear nothing about his rooting for the Red Sox or the Patriots,” Archbishop Lori said.

The archbishop thanked Alfred and Jean Rozanski, the bishop’s parents, noting that “we would not be here today” without them. He characterized Bishop Rozanski’s service as one that brought joy and hope to the archdiocese.

“You’ve built trust,” Archbishop Lori said. “You’ve built community. You’ve strengthened parish communities. You’ve encouraged vocations. You’ve been a source of unity for us all. You’ve proclaimed the Gospel with clarity and love.”

After his priestly ordination in 1984, Bishop Rozanski served as associate pastor of St. Michael the Archangel, Overlea; the cathedral; St. Anthony, Baltimore, and St. Isaac Jogues, Carney. He was pastor of Holy Cross and St. Mary, Star of the Sea, Baltimore; temporary administrator of Immaculate Conception, Towson; and pastor of St. John the Evangelist, Severna Park.

Ordained a bishop in 2004, Bishop Rozanski first oversaw a vicariate that included the parishes of Anne Arundel, Baltimore and Harford counties. Later, when the archdiocesan vicariate structure was altered, he oversaw the newly formed Seton vicariate, whose territory includes Allegany, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Howard and Washington counties.

Bishop Rozanski was also the vicar to Hispanics. A separate Mass of Thanksgiving for his ministry was offered in Spanish July 11 at Sacred Heart of Jesus – Sagrado Corazón de Jesús in Highlandtown.

During a reception under a white tent outside the cathedral following the July 13 celebration, Mass-goers formed a long line to greet Bishop Rozanski.

“He’s so human,” said Anna Karsner, a former teacher at St. Anthony School in Baltimore, who remembered Bishop Rozanski visiting the students as a young priest. “He always has time for everybody.”

Peggy Otenasek, a parishioner of the cathedral, described the bishop as a humble man who delivered uplifting homilies.

“He talks about everyday living,” Otenasek said, “about how life can be difficult, but God is always with us. We are never alone.”

In addition to Archbishop Lori, Bishop Newman and Bishop Madden, more than 50 priests and approximately 12 deacons and many pastoral leaders were present for the celebration, some of them traveling from the westernmost corner of the archdiocese.

Barbara Anderson, pastoral life director of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Thurmont and St. Anthony Shrine in Emmitsburg, remembered that when she could not locate a priest to celebrate Masses in the summer, Bishop Rozanski stepped in to cover them – just one sign of his generosity, she said.

“I’m so happy for him,” Anderson said. “It’s going to be an exciting time for him, but it’s going to be hard for us to lose such a Baltimore presence. You can’t get much more ‘Baltimore’ than him. We are going to miss that.”

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