

Archbishop welcomes religious newcomers

Religious newcomers to the Archdiocese of Baltimore got a crash course on their new archdiocese, learning everything from local pronunciations of 'Bawlmer' to where to turn for help in their ministries during a late September orientation at the Catholic Center.

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien welcomed 30 religious sisters, brothers and priests – 14 of whom attended the orientation. He thanked them for their various ministries which include education, parish work, social justice and outreach to those in need.

"I am grateful for the dedication and service of the many religious institutes who have served in this archdiocese since the beginning," he said. "I count on your wisdom, witness and support as we work together to be faithful to the mission of the Church."

The archbishop said there are 22 religious communities of men, 2 religious communities of brothers and 44 religious communities of women now serving within the archdiocese. In addition, there are 18 religious communities of priests who do not have permanent ministries in the archdiocese but who assist in parishes and institutions.

Sister Constance Gilder, S.S.J., the archbishop's delegate for religious, said the orientation is an annual event that gives newcomers the opportunity to meet one another and Catholic Center officials.

Father Richard Villa, S.M., an associate pastor of St. Joseph in Sykesville who previously served as associate dean at the University of Dallas, said his new assignment is his first on the East Coast. He was particularly interested in learning about archdiocesan offices dedicated to Hispanic and African-American ministries.

Sister Loraine Marie Maguire, L.S.P., provincial superior of the Baltimore Province of the Little Sisters of the Poor, called it an honor to minister in Baltimore.

“No matter where you come from, you always feel connected to Baltimore,” she said. “It was the first diocese in the United States. The roots of the faith are here.”

Father Richard Lawrence, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul in Baltimore, gave a presentation on the history of the archdiocese, outlining its tradition of ecumenism, defense of religious liberty and collegiality.

The religious new to Baltimore represent the following communities: Missionaries of Charity, Little Sisters of Jesus, Comboni Missionary Sisters, Little Sisters of the Poor, Jesuits, Marianists and Capuchin Franciscans.