

Archdiocese of Baltimore welcomes its newest priest



Father Robert Katafiasz prostrates himself in prayer during his Dec. 15 ordination Mass at the Baltimore Basilica. (Richard Lippenholz/Special to the Review)

Father Robert Katafiasz humbly walked through a tunnel of applause at the conclusion of his ordination Mass Dec. 15 as the congregation filled the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore with a passionate rendition of “Lift High the Cross.”

The only priest ordained, the 36-year-old was able to add personal touches to the liturgy, such as having his parents, Kenneth and Rosemary, and his nieces, Caitlin and Julia DeBoy, 11 and 8, respectively, bring the gifts to the altar.

For the Gospel reading, Father Katafiasz requested John 21:15-17, in which Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him, and to tend his flock. The reason, Archbishop William E. Lori said, was because of Father Katafiasz’s desire to tend the flock.

“I love that Gospel,” Father Katafiasz told the Review. “(Jesus) specifically says, ‘Do you love me?’ before he calls (Peter) to service.”

It reminds Father Katafiasz that one must love the Lord first, before one can serve his people.



Archbishop William E. Lori prays over Father Robert Katafiasz during the Dec. 15 priestly ordination Mass at the Baltimore Basilica. (Richard Lippenholz/Special to the Review)

“We are ordaining a man who will bring the Lord here to us,” Archbishop Lori said in his homily. “Let us regard this glorious day of your ordination not as the evening of your life but rather as the dawn of a life of priestly service.”

After the homily, Father Katafiasz declared his intention to undertake the office of the priesthood in the Promise of the Elect. He then prostrated himself in the sanctuary as the congregation called upon the Communion of Saints, praying for him in the Litany of Supplication.

The archbishop conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit upon Father Katafiasz through the laying on of hands. One by one, the dozens of priests in attendance repeated the gesture, praying over their newest brother.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders was conferred upon the new priest by Archbishop Lori with the Prayer of Ordination. Father Gerard Francik, pastor of St. Mark in Fallston, vested Father Katafiasz, who spent a pastoral year at the Harford County parish. Father Francik was the archdiocesan vocations director when the newly ordained priest was entering seminary.



Father Gerard Francik, pastor of St. Mark in Fallston, vests Father Robert Katafiasz during the Dec. 15 priestly ordination Mass at the Baltimore Basilica. (Richard Lippenholz/Special to the Review)

"If ever there was someone who made a loving and persevering path to the priesthood ... it's Father Rob," Archbishop Lori said.

Archbishop Lori said he felt a pent up demand for the congregation to express their congratulations to the newest priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The faithful vehemently applauded.

A second wave of applause erupted when the archbishop announced Father Katafiasz' first assignment: he will be serving - or, more accurately, staying - at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ellicott City, where he served as a transitional deacon for the past six months.

Father Katafiasz celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving at his home parish, St. Jane Frances de Chantal in Pasadena, Dec. 16, the third Sunday of Advent, or Gaudete Sunday, known for its rose-colored vestments.



Father Robert Katafiasz receives an embrace during his Dec. 15 priestly ordination. (Richard Lippenholz/Special to the Review)

As clergy only wear those vestments twice a year, Father Katafiasz said he was going to simply wear purple for the Mass - a plan that was happily derailed when his parents gifted him a set in rose.

"He didn't ask for it," his mother, Rosemary, said.

"It was our extravagance," his father, Kenneth added, explaining that their son is a simple and humble man.

Kenneth, following the joy-filled weekend, said he feels similar to how he feels after eating a big meal - totally contented and relaxed, like breathing a sigh of relief.

"Joyful, joyful, joyful," Kenneth said. "Humbled, at the same time, that the Lord used us to make this happen."



Father Robert Katafiasz poses after his Dec. 15 priestly ordination with his parents, Kenneth and Rosemary Katafiasz, and Archbishop William E. Lori. (Richard Lippenholz/Special to the Review)

Kenneth and Rosemary plan to drive the 20-30 minutes from their home to Our Lady of Perpetual Help for Christmas Eve Mass with their son.

“The Lord brought him through so much,” Rosemary said. “He never gave up.”

Excitement, Father Katafiasz said, does not describe how he feels on the occasion of his ordination.

“It’s more of a culmination of a quiet joy that’s been building over the past 9½ years,” he said. “It’s like a coming into this grace that (God) had prepared for me.”

“There’s a lot of joy ... I look forward to being here (in the Archdiocese of Baltimore) for the rest of my life serving God and his people.”

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Down to earth: Pasadena parishioner to be ordained a priest Dec. 15

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