

Bishop Galeone, Baltimore's gift to Florida, says farewell



St. Augustine Bishop Victor B. Galeone is shown in his Baltimore days. (Catholic Review file photo)

In the course of more than 13 years writing for The Catholic Review, I've interviewed thousands of people. Only one asked to begin with a prayer.

Monsignor Victor B. Galeone had just returned to Maryland in 2000 after leading a two-week archdiocesan mission to Gonaives, Baltimore's sister diocese in Haiti. Before I could get out my first question, the humble pastor of St. Agnes in Catonsville bowed his head and asked me to join him. After making the Sign of the Cross, he prayed for God to bless the interview. He then called on the Holy Spirit to guide my questions and his answers.

It was a simple, but powerful moment – one I've never forgotten. Although priests and parishioners had often told me of Monsignor Galeone's holiness, that was the first time I experienced it personally.

Almost exactly one year after that interview, I had the honor of covering Monsignor Galeone's episcopal ordination and installation as the ninth bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida. Addressing his new flock after his installation, Bishop Galeone said his vision for the future was to "make Jesus better known and loved and imitated as the Lord of our lives."

It seems Baltimore's much-loved gift to Florida has fulfilled his mission.

Bishop Galeone submitted his resignation letter to Pope Benedict XVI last year as required by Church law when he turned 75. A farewell Mass was celebrated in November. The Diocese of St. Augustine has posted tributes to the bishop – a spiritual leader unafraid to speak up in defense of human life, in support of marriage and in solidarity with the poor.

Here is Bishop Galeone's farewell homily, touching on the past, present and future:

[youtube=<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmGXa7GGFPI>]

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