

Bishop Libasci installed as 10th bishop of New Hampshire's only diocese

MANCHESTER, N.H.- On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the day when he said the "whole church recalls God's invitation to life," Bishop Peter A. Libasci was installed as the 10th bishop of Manchester.

The former auxiliary bishop of Rockville Centre, N.Y., delivered the homily during the two-hour installation Mass Dec. 8 in Manchester's St. Joseph Cathedral. He recalled the biblical account of Mary's conception without original sin to her elderly parents, Joachim and Anna, and her response years later to the news that she would give birth to the son of God.

"Preserved from original sin, Mary does not follow the example of Adam or Eve in their confusion, and blame, and divisiveness," Bishop Libasci said. "Instead she says, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.' And immediately a companionship between Mary and almighty God, a companionship between heaven and earth, is begun."

Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston presided at the installation Mass and was the installing bishop. Principal concelebrants included Auxiliary Bishop Francis J. Christian of Manchester, retired Bishop John B. McCormack of Manchester and Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre.

Bishop Libasci asked the congregation of just under 1,000 people to "join me in asking God for mercy, that God may give his unworthy minister grace to sing together with you the eternal praises of God."

In addition, he said, "this new bishop who comes to you now asks you to allow the stirrings of God's grace to breathe new life into us all - together so that this faith that has been the source of hope and love in this diocese for so many generations ... can be entrusted whole and entire to a new young generation."

Cardinal O'Malley told the 60-year-old Bishop Libasci in closing remarks at the installation Mass that he "will not be bored" but will face many challenges.

"Know that you are not alone," he added. "The bishops of the province are very fine men and you will find in them a band of brothers who will always support you."

Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, apostolic nuncio to the United States, brought greetings from Pope Benedict XVI and reminded the congregation of the pope's recent message to bishops making their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican that they must speak out in "defense of moral truth ... despite attempts to still the church's voice in the public square."

The diocese Bishop Libasci now heads covers the entire state of New Hampshire and includes about 288,000 Catholics in a total population of 1.3 million.

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