Bishop Malooly installed as 9th bishop of Wilmington

By George P. Matysek Jr.

gmatysek@CatholicReview.org

WILMINGTON – In his 38 years of priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Bishop W. Francis Malooly earned a reputation as a man of good humor, deep commitment to his faith, genuine humility and a pastoral sensitivity to others.

All those qualities were on display at St. Elizabeth Church in Wilmington, Del., Sept. 8, when Baltimore's former western vicar was installed as the 9th bishop of Wilmington.

Entering a church overflowing with 1,000 people, a smiling Bishop Malooly was greeted with sustained applause as he slowly made his way down the center aisle in a colorful procession of 200 priests, 100 deacons, 19 bishops, four archbishops and Cardinal William H. Keeler.

In welcoming remarks, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Metropolitan Archbishop of Baltimore, said the people of Wilmington are gaining a spiritual shepherd who is anxious to share his gifts.

"You will find in him a bishop who will, instinctively and by the grace of God, put himself completely at your service," said Archbishop O'Brien. "Compassionate, a prayerful bishop of unquestioned integrity, with a sharp mind and a specially-patented Irish wit, Bishop Francis Malooly is already missed in Baltimore and you will soon see why."

Archbishop O'Brien drew laughter and applause when he noted that in the most recent NFL draft, the University of Delaware sent quarterback Joe Flacco to a "most grateful Baltimore Ravens."

"So today we in Baltimore reluctantly surrender you to Delaware, Bishop Malooly,"

the archbishop said. “Reluctantly, but willingly, since it fulfills the wish of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI and it is clearly for the benefit of the greater, wider Catholic Church.”

As part of the installation rite, priest advisors to the bishop inspected the apostolic mandate from Pope Benedict XVI appointing Bishop Malooly to his new post. Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the pope’s representative to the United States, then read the mandate before asking Bishop Malooly if he is willing to accept his new diocese. After the bishop replied in the affirmative, Archbishops Sambi and O’Brien escorted him to the bishop’s chair where he was seated and presented with a crozier that symbolized his pastoral office.

Archbishop Sambi conveyed the pope’s “heartfelt congratulations” and “assurance of prayers of support.”

Before he started his homily, Bishop Malooly displayed a flash of his much-touted wit when he referred to Archbishop O’Brien’s comparison of him to Mr. Flacco. The 64-year-old bishop said he was happy that Baltimore’s new quarterback “had a good game” during the Ravens’ Sept. 7 season-opening win over the Cincinnati Bengals since he didn’t want the press to speculate about he and the young quarterback being replaced.

Wearing a gold-colored miter, Bishop Malooly said he was very grateful to Cardinal Keeler, Archbishop William D. Borders and Archbishop O’Brien, all of whom were in attendance, for serving as his “most recent spiritual fathers.” He thanked outgoing Wilmington Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli and his predecessor, Bishop Robert E. Mulvee, for being “outstanding spiritual leaders here in the Diocese of Wilmington.”

Speaking on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, Bishop Malooly said it served as a “vivid reminder that every life is special.”

“We will continue to stress the constant teaching of the church that each person must respect every life from conception to natural death,” he said, “and we will continue to seek the intercession of St. Thomas More for statesmen, politicians, Supreme Court justices, judges and lawyers that they may be courageous and effective in defending and promoting the sanctity of human life, the foundation of

every human right, the foundation of our love for the poor."

Bishop Malooly apologized to the victims of clergy sexual abuse and he vowed to continue the work of Bishop Saltarelli in bringing healing and restoring broken trust.

"I want to meet each and every victim who desires such a meeting with me," he said. "I want to hear what you want me to hear, and I want to work closely with each of you to learn how best the church can be part of bringing healing to all victims."

The new bishop said he has "no predisposed plan" for what he will do as bishop.

"I will work with you to develop what we will do together and to continue the good that has occurred," he said.

In Spanish, Bishop Malooly said he looks forward to working with Spanish-speaking Catholics, and promised to receive tutoring so he can better communicate with the Hispanic community.

At the end of the 2-hour ceremony that included prayers in English, Spanish, Korean, Italian, Tagalog, Polish and French, Bishop Malooly drew more laughter when he noted that he has already seen the spot in the cemetery where he will one day be buried.

"It's a nice view," he quipped.

The Parkville native, raised in St. Ursula parish, concluded by pledging that he would work to foster religious vocations in his new diocese and thanked his flock for the warm welcome.

Established in 1868 by Pope Pius IX, the Diocese of Wilmington encompasses the state of Delaware and the nine counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Approximately 233,000 Catholics worship in 58 parishes and 18 missions.