

Bishop Newman celebrates 25 years as a spiritual shepherd

By George P. Matysek Jr.

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Archbishop William D. Borders wanted a word with then-Monsignor William C. Newman, rector of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland.

The archbishop had news from Pope John Paul II that was going to make the lunch break of a priests' senate meeting at the cathedral much more interesting: Monsignor Newman was to become a bishop.

"I don't even remember him even asking the question," Bishop Newman remembered with a laugh. "He just took it for granted that I would say yes. It was a great honor."

Twenty five years after Bishop Newman answered the pope's call to leadership, he celebrated the silver jubilee of his episcopal ordination with a July 12 Mass of Thanksgiving at St. John the Evangelist in Hydes.

Cardinal William H. Keeler, Wilmington Bishop W. Francis Malooly, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski and Bishop Denis J. Madden joined their brother bishop for the celebration.

Looking back on his many years as a spiritual shepherd, Bishop Newman said he most enjoyed working with the people. He called it a "grace" to be with a great diversity of people including popes and archbishops; priests, religious and parishioners; civic and interfaith leaders; and prison inmates and people in need.

Bishop Newman had a strong background as he took on the role of eastern vicar bishop - overseeing dozens of parishes in Anne Arundel, Baltimore and Harford counties. He was a former associate pastor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Highlandtown, principal of St. Paul Latin School in Baltimore, superintendent of

Catholic schools, secretary of education, pastor of Ss. Philip and James in Homewood and the fifth rector of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen.

"In my years as a priest, I was always a generalist," the 80-year-old Baltimore native said. "I didn't concentrate on one area. I enjoyed every kind of ministry. As bishop, I had to learn to extend my gifts on a broader level."

Celebrating the sacrament of confirmation was a special honor, Bishop Newman said. He estimated that he led about 50 confirmations a year representing nearly 1,000 by the time he retired in 2003. He continues to celebrate the sacrament in parishes throughout the archdiocese.

"I feel very privileged to be the channel of grace bringing the Holy Spirit upon the young people I met along the way," he said.

Over the years, Bishop Newman honed a homily for confirmation that has been much admired by parents for its sense of compassion and clarity. The message focuses on how young people can find happiness by knowing, loving and serving God.

"The only way you are going to be happy here on earth is to make good, moral decisions in your life," he said. "If you make good, moral decisions, then you'll be able to live with yourself without any worry, anxiety or guilt."

In his retirement, Bishop Newman has enjoyed assisting at St. John in Hydes (where he resides) and the nearby Glen Meadows Retirement Community. He checks his mail at the Catholic Center once a week.

"I've been very blessed in my life," Bishop Newman said. "I'm thankful to God."