

Bringing light to darkness

By **George P. Matysek Jr.**

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ROME – Being able to concelebrate Mass inside Rome’s magnificent Basilica of St. John Lateran was one of the most special moments of Father Paschal Morlino’s priesthood. The Benedictine pastor of St. Benedict in Baltimore was one of about 25 priests from the Archdiocese of Baltimore who concelebrated Mass with Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien, Cardinal William H. Keeler and Baltimore’s auxiliary bishops in Rome’s oldest patriarchal basilica June 28.

As he stood in the sanctuary, Father Morlino lifted his eyes in awe of the richly decorated ceiling by Flaminio Boulanger and Vico di Raffaele. Visible golden rays of light beamed down in diagonal lines through clear windows high overhead as the Mass proceeded.

“It’s just stunning,” said Father Morlino, who called the ceiling’s gold depictions of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist “magnificent”.

“This is the mother church,” Father Morlino said. “It was here before St. Peter’s Basilica. It’s where it all began.”

In his homily, Monsignor Robert Jaskot, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said Christ asks his followers to bring light into a world darkened by evil.

“It is an urgent call to charity and not just a pious platitude,” said Monsignor Jaskot.

The priest noted that God has given the church the communion of saints and the pope to help in the mission of bringing light to the world.

St. John Latern is the official cathedral of Rome, serving as the seat of the bishop of Rome, the pope. The altar contains what is believed to be the wooden altar upon which St. Peter celebrated Mass when he was in Rome.