

Cardinal O'Brien relaxed as he hands over archdiocese

Cardinal Edwin F. O'Brien said it has been "tough to be in 'purgatory'" for the last nine months since his appointment as pro-grand master of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. He has done two jobs in that time, as head of the worldwide order dedicated to support of the church in the Holy Land, and as apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Looking relaxed and smiling the evening before the installation of his successor, Archbishop William E. Lori, as the 16th archbishop of Baltimore, the cardinal noted that it's good that the new bishop is here, calling him a good man, and a smart man.

He said the work he has done since his appointment to the position in Rome has been made easier by his two staffs at the Archdiocese of Baltimore and at the headquarters in Rome of the Equestrian Order. Fortunately, he said, he has not had to deal with any crises, and the administration on both sides of the Atlantic has been very capable and helpful.

He expects to be "very relieved" once the installation is over May 16, and he leaves for Rome about 24 hours after that, arriving May 18. He'll have a quiet weekend and then get down to the full-time affairs of the Holy Sepulcher next week.

He will return to the U.S. occasionally, but he does not have a lot of plans so far, other than an investiture for the order's Eastern Lieutenancy. When he is in the United States, Baltimore will be his home base, with a suite of rooms at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen.

He also is making plans for his first trip to the Holy Land as grand master of the order, likely this fall, at which time he will be formally welcomed there.

He presided over a vespers service at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, during which he sat in that church's cathedra below his episcopal coat of arms in Baltimore one last time. When incoming Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori during his homily thanked Cardinal O'Brien for

his great service to the archdiocese and to the church, the congregation responded with a standing ovation.