

# Days in a daze

Last week, the East Coast was shaken by an earthquake, followed by Hurricane Irene barreling her way up the Eastern Seaboard. Some folks on social networks wondered if plagues of locusts were coming next.

Well, no locusts came, but the Archdiocese of Baltimore certainly got turned upside down by a third event in one week when news came by way of an announcement Aug. 29 from the Vatican that Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien will be leaving to take a new position as leader of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher, based in Rome. Until his successor is appointed and installed, he will remain as apostolic administrator, but eventually we will lose his service.

At a news conference to discuss his appointment, the archbishop first invoked the Holy Spirit, and then said prayers and condolences for those people and communities affected by the hurricane.

Archbishop O'Brien said his years as the spiritual leader of the church in Maryland have been among the most rewarding and challenging of his career. "I regret that I will be unable to see to completion many of the works that we have begun and those which I had planned for the remainder of my years here," he said.

Remaining to be completed are implementation of the Blue Ribbon Committee's strategic plan for Catholic schools and a planned capital campaign to support Catholic education and other major archdiocesan priorities. The Cathedral Foundation, parent company of The Catholic Review, is just beginning to implement a strategic plan nurtured under the archbishop's guidance as publisher and chairman. A parish planning process had begun with listening sessions throughout the archdiocese at which Archbishop O'Brien participated. That planning will "go ahead. ... It's going to be at the grass-roots level," he said of the process.

The archbishop said he was in a daze for a couple of days after getting the call from Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state informing him that Pope Benedict wished for him to take on a new assignment. "I had a lot of encouragement. ... I had some good friends (in Rome) who know the situation who were able to put it

in perspective. ... And I think I'm on a better balance now."

And we are in a daze as well. At press time, many people in our area were still dealing with power outages. While power companies continue to work to restore electricity, neighborhoods and communities pick up toppled trees and storm-strewn trash. Many school openings had been delayed for at least two days, with some schools deciding to alter their schedules and just open after Labor Day instead.

Yet for the church, we can be "on a better balance now," too. The initial news of Archbishop O'Brien's new appointment may come as a shock to us, as it did to him, but we must continue the work of the church. The transition will be transparent to most of us in many ways; as apostolic administrator, Archbishop O'Brien has most of the duties and responsibilities he had as Archbishop of Baltimore. Moreover, much of the work of the church is done at the parish and school level, and in hundreds of service organizations such as Catholic Charities. That work can and must continue unabated. Major efforts such as the implementation of the Blue Ribbon schools strategic plan will continue as well. We can proceed with confidence that the Holy Spirit will guide us in these coming months.

"I do want to insist the work of the archdiocese will be carried on, as intense and as long-range as is possible and as is now," the archbishop said Aug. 29. "I will do everything to assure that it happens."

We need not be in a daze. Let's do all we can to assure that happens, too. We can start by praying for Archbishop O'Brien for success in his dual role in the coming months, and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide Pope Benedict in selection of a good shepherd for the Church of Baltimore as successor to the archbishop.

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