

Hope soars with installation

By Therese Wilson Favors

As Archbishop William E. Lori, the 16th Archbishop of Baltimore, comes into our midst, hope soars. When you ponder the many photos and streams of video taken the day of the announcement, here in Baltimore “joy in the Lord” seems to be a close companion of our new archbishop. If you missed it, Catholic Review Editor Christopher Gunty quotes the archbishop saying “I’m thrilled, delighted, humbled, all at the same time.” Another quote from Archbishop Lori states, “I would hope I come to be known as a pastor of souls.”

Yes, hope soars these days as Archbishop Lori has announced that “the New Evangelization” promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI is a “top priority.” Since the jubilee year 2000, African American Catholics of Baltimore have been out in the vineyards of our streets and neighborhoods, planting seeds of evangelization through an intentional outreach ministry titled Operation Faith Lift.

Fifty parishioners of St. Veronica Parish in Cherry Hill recently went door to door witnessing to the “transformative power of knowing Jesus.” Their goal was to visit every one of the households in Cherry Hill - more than 1,000. Josephite Father Donald Fest and Melvin Neale led the army of believers with a well-organized plan and a strong testimony that “Jesus is Lord” on their lips.

In other parts of town - from north to south, east to west, St. Bernardine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Edward, St. Francis Xavier, Blessed Sacrament, St. Peter Claver, St. Pius V, St. Ann and St. Wenceslaus - a Catholic culture of witnessing was taking root.

Our new archbishop has chosen as his motto “Love in Truth,” taken from Ephesians

4:15. Its exact scriptural translation is “living the truth in love.” This is another uplifting message in a city that needs to build itself up in love. So many places are in need of God’s love, God’s healing and God’s redemption. That is why our many parishes in the city continue to be so significant in their ministry of the corporal works of mercy. The dilapidation of whole neighborhoods and the violence that poverty provokes have filtered a level of depression and oppression that warrants the prayerful response of “living the truth in love.”

As I ponder Archbishop Lori’s motto, I think of the Oblate Sisters of Providence and their beloved foundress, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange. The church of Baltimore has been richly blessed with these holy women and their ministry. We pray that Archbishop Lori will graciously lend support toward efforts for the canonization of Mother Lange.

We proudly welcome Archbishop Lori to Baltimore, home of the Oblate Sisters and the first black Catholic parish in the United States, St. Francis Xavier, established in 1863. Baltimore also produced the very first priest of African American descent ordained in the U.S., Josephite Father Charles Randolph Uncles. We are proud of our rich heritage, stretching back to the arrival of the Ark and Dove in 1634, when Jesuit Father Andrew White came to the shores of St. Clement Island, and a Catholic of color, Matthias de Sousa, was there and assisted in building the altar.

We are proud of St. Frances Academy, the first Catholic high school for people of color, established in 1828 by the Oblate Sisters. We are proud of our steadfast presence and involvement in the church of Baltimore to “further the gospel of Jesus Christ” even through the times of trouble. We are proud to tell our story and to share it with Archbishop Lori as he stands in our midst as our shepherd. Hope soars and we await opportunities to “work in the vineyard of the Lord” with him. Hope soars as we await to share with him “what we have seen and heard.”

Welcome Archbishop William E. Lori, may God bless you as you minister and become known to us as the pastor of souls in this beloved archdiocese.

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