

Military priests describe new archbishop as caring, capable

As a former military chaplain and Archbishop for the Archdiocese for the U.S. Military Services for 10 years, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien has touched the lives of many in the armed forces.

Monsignor John L. FitzGerald, director of the Apostleship of the Sea ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and a former chairman for the priests' council for the military archdiocese, has had the opportunity to work "very closely" with Archbishop O'Brien.

"What impresses me with him, is that when he would travel, he would talk to a 19-year-old lance corporal Marine with the same attention that he would give a general," said Monsignor FitzGerald, a retired U.S. Navy chaplain. "I know he has a good, solid catechesis of young people, and one of the things I'm so happy about is that so few American bishops have traveled all over the world time and time again like he has. So he really sees the needs of the Catholic Church universal. I think that's a unique, unique background."

Father Tyson Wood, a former Lutheran pastor who was ordained in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 2005 and serves as a Catholic chaplain in the U.S. Army, took time while stationed in Iraq to e-mail his thoughts about Archbishop O'Brien.

"He was the bishop who ordained me as deacon, and he attended my priesthood ordination," said Father Wood, who is married with two children. "He has been very supportive to my family and me throughout my time in seminary and as a priest chaplain on active duty in the Army."

He said he received a "wonderful pastoral response" to his e-mail informing Archbishop O'Brien about his deployment to Iraq.

"Archbishop O'Brien is a very caring and capable bishop," Father Wood said. "He has done so much good for the military archdiocese and for the entire Catholic Church. The Archdiocese of Baltimore will surely benefit from his leadership."

Monsignor FitzGerald shared his sentiments.

"I'm very happy, and I think the Premier See is receiving a top-notch shepherd in (Archbishop John) Carroll's lineage," he said. "He'll give us everything he's got."

Father Carl Cummings, pastor of St. Agnes in Catonsville and a former U.S. Navy

chaplain, met the new archbishop while stationed in Hawaii and described him as "personable."

"He's a very fine, good, solid churchman," said Father Cummings. "I think he's going to be a real fine addition to the archdiocese. It's a good fit, even though he's a Yankees' fan."