

Priests welcome Archbishop O'Brien

More than 400 priests, some shaking hands and waving as they went, slowly processed down the main aisle of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen before Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien's installation.

"It was a deeply spiritual experience," said Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. Ursula in Parkville. "This event was a day of great hope for the archdiocese."

Although nearly 2,000 people attended the celebration at the Homeland cathedral, Monsignor Richard H. Tillman said he was "sure they could have filled the cathedral five times more" if there had been room. The pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Columbia described the ceremony as a wonderful outpouring of priests, bishops and cardinals.

"It was a great honor to represent the priests as we welcomed Archbishop O'Brien," said Father Jay F. O'Connor, director of clergy personnel. "It was a great honor to speak in their name and to welcome him and offer him our prayerful support."

Father Raymond C. Chase, who works at Catholic Charities, said, "It's historic at one level because you have the opportunity to see another archbishop take hold of the reins of the archdiocese." He added, "It was also exciting from the perspective of being able to get some sense of how he sees his ministry to the archdiocese."

As part of that ministry, Archbishop O'Brien said in his homily that he will make vocations to the priesthood a priority.

"All of us should have the confidence, in the name and power of Christ, to challenge more men by personal and direct invitation to become shepherds after the heart of Christ," said Archbishop O'Brien.

Father James P. Kiesel, pastor of St. Dominic in Hamilton, said the homily was the most moving part of the two-hour ceremony.

"I'm very delighted and thrilled that he's our archbishop because he's going to reinvigorate the priesthood in all of us," said Father Kiesel. "He's like a prophet proclaiming God's word. We really need to hear God's word more than ever today, especially for the city of Baltimore."

Father David W. Shaum, a retired priest who resides at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, said the ceremony was uplifting and beautifully done. He expressed confidence that Archbishop O'Brien will be a "dynamic and dashing" leader.

"I was certainly impressed with his homily," said Father Shaum. "He covered the whole thing beautifully, and referred to all the cares and concerns that he's going to have for the diocese and the people. That's wonderful."

Father Chase was also moved by the archbishop's homily.

"His homily certainly speaks rather eloquently of his desire to be deeply involved in the work of the archdiocese," he said.

Standing outside the cathedral after the installation with bells ringing in the background, Monsignor Tillman said, "I think it's upward and onward. I get a sense of real joy and impending more joy."