

Rozanski family overjoyed for native son

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SPRINGFIELD, Mass. - Standing in front of the Cathedral of St. Michael just moments before her son would be installed as the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Springfield Aug. 12, Jean Rozanski beamed at the sight of Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski surrounded by well-wishers.

"I just want to grab him and hug him and tell him to keep up the good work and do a good job as he did in Baltimore," said the longtime parishioner of Sacred Heart of Mary in Graceland Park.

For the Rozanskis, the departure of their son to take on a new leadership role is a joy and a sacrifice.

"He's leaving us," Jean Rozanski said, "but it's God's call. He has to go and we'll just work along with him and pray and hope everything works out for him."

Alfred Rozanski, the bishop's father, said he "felt great" at the installation.

"I'm real proud of my son," he said. "Everything just worked out fine today."

At the start of the liturgy, Bishop Timothy McDonnell, eighth bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, thanked the Rozanskis for raising their son in the faith. His comment sparked a prolonged standing ovation from the congregation, while Bishop Rozanski smiled in the sanctuary.

During the Mass, the bishop used a chalice his parents had given him at his ordination to the priesthood. His parents were first to receive communion from him at the installation and the first to have his kisses planted on their cheeks as he recessed out the cathedral.

"It's just unbelievable," Jean Rozanski said. "I never dreamed this would happen."

Albert Rozanski, one of Bishop Rozanski's younger brothers, vividly recalled prior to

the Mass how he and another sibling once pranked their elder brother when they were growing up.

Young Mitchell was babysitting his younger siblings, Albert Rozanski remembered, when Kenneth Rozanski hatched the plot.

“Kenny said he was going to put ketchup on my face and for me to tell Mitchell that he hit me,” Albert Rozanski said with a laugh. “I was just a little kid, so I did it. I went in there crying and screaming that I was bleeding.”

Mitchell was not amused, scolding Kenneth for hitting his brother before noticing the “bleeding” youngest brother laughing.

Decades after the never-forgotten joke, Albert Rozanski said he has nothing but pride and admiration for his brother.

“We are going to miss him a lot,” said the parishioner of St. Augustine in Elkridge. “You hate to see him go, but it’s better for him. Everyone is excited for him.”

Dalton Rozanski, Albert Rozanski’s 9-year-old son, said his classmates at St. Augustine School are excited for his uncle. But he is not likely to follow in his uncle’s footsteps.

“All the kids at my school, every time we have religion, they all come up to me and ask if I’m going to become a priest,” the fourth grader said. “And I say, ‘I don’t think so.’”

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