

With gratitude for the work of this evangelist: Birthday blessings to Cardinal William Henry Keeler



Happy 85th birthday, Cardinal Keeler!

March 4 marks the 85th birthday of our much-loved retired Archbishop. Cardinal Keeler served as the fourteenth Archbishop of Baltimore from 1989 to 2007. His episcopal motto is “*Opus Fac Evangelistae*” (*Do The Work of an Evangelist*).

Born in 1931 in San Antonio, Texas, William Henry Keeler was ordained to the priesthood at age 24 at the Church of the Holy Apostles (Santi Apostoli) in Rome in 1955.

Father Keeler was named Auxiliary Bishop of Harrisburg by Pope John Paul II in July of 1979, with his episcopal ordination on September 21, 1979 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Harrisburg.

Following the death of Bishop Joseph T. Daley in late 1983, he was appointed Bishop of Harrisburg. His Installation Mass was celebrated by Cardinal John Joseph Krol, then-Archbishop of Philadelphia, on the feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, January 4, 1984.

Five years later, Pope John Paul II named him the fourteenth Archbishop of Baltimore, following the retirement of Archbishop William Donald Borders. The installation liturgy was held on May 23, 1989 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen to a standing room only crowd.

Archbishop Keeler was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope John Paul II on November 28, 1994. A large contingency from the Archdiocese went to Rome for the consistory that included his elevation and the reception of the “red hat.”

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A look back at a few highlights from Cardinal Keeler’s years as Archbishop of Baltimore:

1. Cardinal William Keeler named Marylander of the Year in 1994 by the Baltimore Sun:

The Baltimore Sun named newly-elevated Cardinal Keeler “Marylander of the Year” when he was named to the College of Cardinals by Pope John Paul II, “a position that

reaffirmed Baltimore's importance as the seat of American Catholicism."

"For leadership in interfaith dialogue, for strengthening the Archdiocese of Baltimore and for restoring Baltimore's prominence in the Church to what history (but no longer size) requires, Cardinal William H. Keeler is The Baltimore Sun's Marylander of the Year. He has been a preeminent force for good will and understanding since becoming a Marylander five years ago."

—The Baltimore Sun



Sharing a welcoming embrace with Cardinal Keeler before Mass at Oriole Park at Camden Yards (Photo: Baltimore Sun)

2. The 1995 Papal visit:

One of Baltimore's proudest moments: The October 8, 1995 visit of Pope John Paul II to our city.

See more photos and read more about that glorious day in "Catholic Throwback Thursday: The 1995 visit of Pope John Paul II to Baltimore."



(White House photo: Eric Draper)

3. Representing the American Church in Rome at the Funeral of Pope John Paul II:

President George W. Bush greets the U.S.-based Cardinals on Thursday, April 7, 2005, in Rome at Villa Taverna, the residence of Mel Sembler, U.S. Ambassador to Italy.

From left are: Roger Cardinal Mahony, archbishop of Los Angeles; President Bush; Francis Cardinal George, archbishop of Chicago; Justin Cardinal Rigali, archbishop of Philadelphia, and William Cardinal Keeler, archbishop of Baltimore.



(Photo: Archdiocese of Baltimore)

4. The re-opening of the Baltimore Basilica after the historic renovation:

At the Rededication Mass for the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 5, 2006:

Cardinal Keeler, seen here wearing the pectoral cross of Archbishop John Carroll, delivered the homily at this historic Mass. He had invited Cardinal James Francis Stafford, former Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, then serving in Rome, to be principal

celebrant of this first public liturgy after the \$34 million project to restore the basilica to its original design.

With His Eminence at left is Msgr. James Vincent Hobbs, the late rector of the Basilica who oversaw restoration project and who passed away in 2012.



Cardinal Keeler retired from administrative episcopal ministry in the Fall of 2007.
(Photo: Archdiocese of Baltimore)

*With love and prayers of gratitude for your service to our Archdiocese and to the
Universal Church:
Happy Birthday, Cardinal Keeler!
Thank you on behalf of your grateful flock.*

Read more of my reflections on the great legacy of Cardinal Keeler to Baltimore:

1. Opus Fac Evangelistae: Celebrating 35 years as a bishop with Cardinal William H. Keeler
2. Catholic Throwback Thursday: The 1995 visit of Pope John Paul II to Baltimore
3. Catholic Throwback Thursday: Remembering the 1996 visit of Blessed Mother Teresa to Baltimore