News

Bishop Mark O'Connell smiles following his installation Mass as the 11th bishop of Albany, N.Y

Bishop Mark O'Connell smiles following his installation Mass as the 11th bishop of Albany, N.Y., at St. Edward the Confessor Church in Clifton Park Dec. 5. (OSV News/The Evangelist/Patrick Dodson)

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Saying that "I am happy when I know I am exactly where God wants me," Bishop Mark O'Connell was officially installed as the 11th bishop of Albany at St. Edward the Confessor Church in Clifton Park.

O'Connell was co-consecrated Dec. 5 by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States, who read the apostolic mandate from Pope Leo XIV appointing O'Connell as bishop of Albany, and Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, who seated O'Connell in his cathedra, or bishop's chair, and handed him his crozier.

"I wanted to be your bishop more than I can say, I just didn't know your name," said O'Connell, who was first known as a happy priest and then a happy bishop.

"With all my heart I believe the Holy Spirit has led me to this moment and to you. When I look back over my life, I can see how everything has prepared me to serve you, to walk with you, and to love you," said the former auxiliary bishop of Boston. "You may have noticed I cannot stop smiling today. It was the same at each of my three ordinations. I smile when I am happy, and I am happy when I know I am exactly where God wants me."

O'Connell succeeds Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, who was installed in 2014 and led the Diocese of Albany through a tumultuous time, which included the hundreds of abuse cases filed under the Child Victims Act and the diocesan bankruptcy in 2023.

While it was frigid outside, nearly 1,000 people packed the church — including three cardinals, 31 bishops, over 200 priests and deacons, and the faithful of the diocese in the worship space and the overflow section outside the main doors.

Even before the installation, O'Connell, who likes to be called Bishop Mark, mingled freely with attendees, chatting and hugging the faithful before he was vested.

As the start of the Mass was delayed by the sheer number of people trying to get into St. Edward's, Bishop Mark was again in the main sanctuary talking with religious sisters, chatting with the large contingent from the Archdiocese of Boston and taking photos.

And after the Mass, there was a large, heated tent set up, so anyone could meet O'Connell for a quick chat and photo.

O'Connell's family, including his brothers, Thomas and John Marion, and his sister, Mary Margaret, were at the service.

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Connell used his motto "*Invenimus Messiam*" ("We have found the Messiah") as one of the lynchpins of his homily, asking the faithful to find their calling — to make their mark — in bringing Jesus to all we meet.

"For too long we divided the people of God into those who teach and those who learn. Vatican II and the recent call to synodality have reminded us that every one of

us is both learner and teacher," he said. "So I call every person in these pews and connected by every means of communication: Discover your own unique calling in God's kingdom and, like St. Andrew, have the courage to proclaim your Messiah to all."

He asked of priests: "Do not be afraid to ask me the hard, unspoken questions like Jude Thaddeus. Do not be afraid to show emotion or to step deeper into intimacy with God. Keep preaching Jesus Christ until your last breath, as Andrew did."

He asked of deacons: "Never take sides, but stand as a bridge — representing me to the people and the people to me. I need you, and our parishes need your stability as priests come and go."

He asked of consecrated religious: "Pray for me, yes, but above all pray for God's people. As St. Francis indicated to his brothers, preach always — use words when necessary."

He asked of lay leaders: "Do not see your responsibilities as a burden but as a calling. Refuse to join the chorus of negativity. Renew yourselves in prayer and stewardship. Together we will face an uncertain financial future, rebuild what has been damaged, take the punches, get back up, and hand on a living faith to a new generation."

He asked of volunteers: "Love your neighbor first and then serve at the altar. Those who serve as Eucharistic ministers and lectors … Let your ministry at the altar naturally flow from this service."

He asked of those called to the priesthood or consecrated life: "Is God speaking to your heart right now through my poor words? That restless sense that 'something is missing,' that mysterious yet persistent call you keep pushing away — open your heart and explore it."

And of those wounded by the church: "I know you. I have walked with many of you as priest, canon lawyer, and bishop. … Let me gently show you Jesus who loves you with an everlasting love. His light is never overcome by darkness, and He is your Messiah as truly as he is mine."