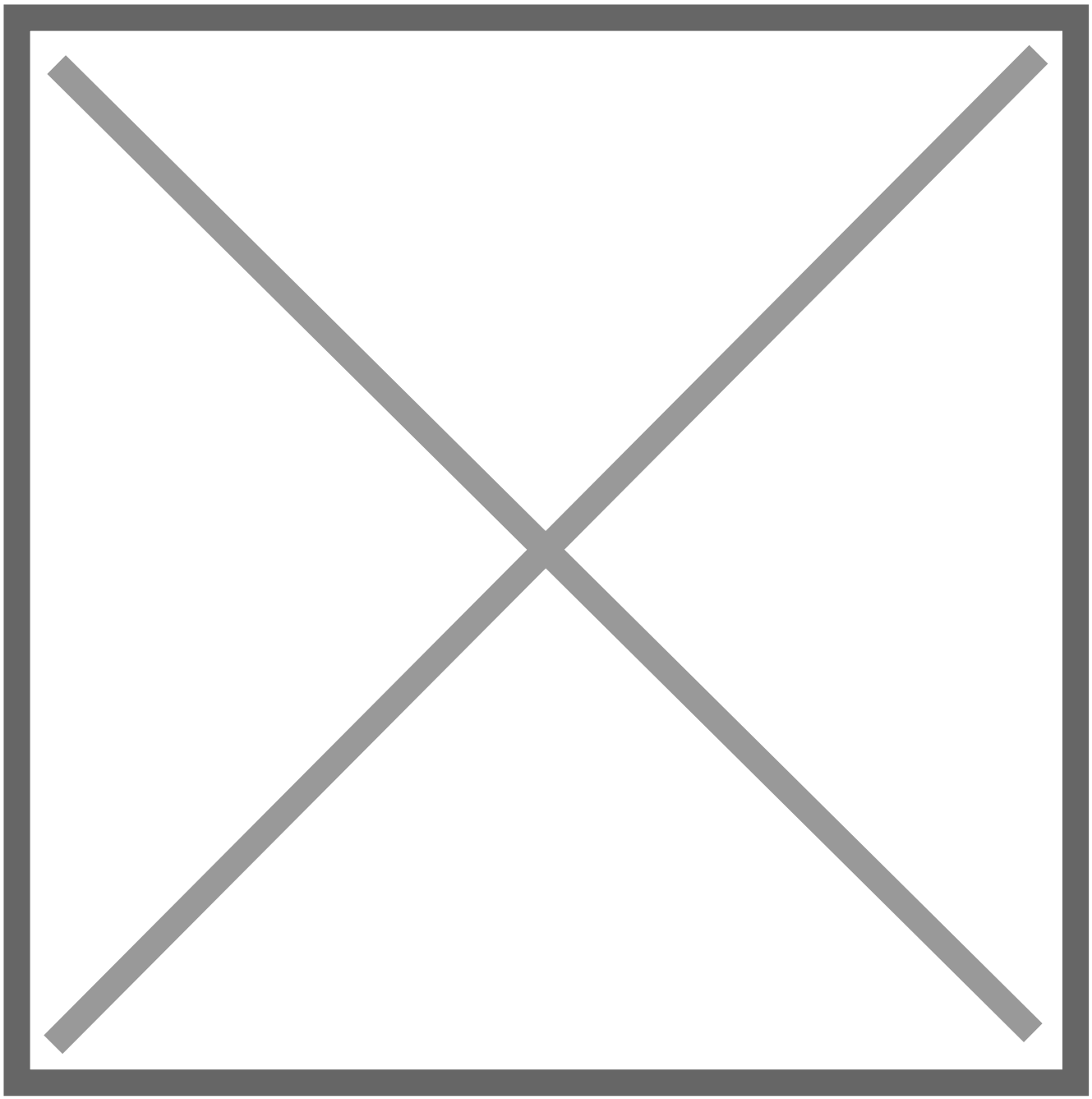
News



Bishop-designate Manuel de Jesús Rodríguez holds up the papal bull on his appointment for well-wishers during his ordination and installation Mass at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Feb. 24, 2026. Rodríguez, previously the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in the Corona section of the New York borough of Queens, N.Y., became the sixth bishop of Palm Beach. (OSV News/Florida Catholic/Jean Gonzalez)



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PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — February 26, 2026
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It is a typical part of an episcopal ordination — the raising of the papal bull announcing Bishop-designate Manuel de Jesús Rodríguez as the sixth bishop of Palm Beach.

But for the faithful welcoming a new shepherd — the first in nearly 23 years — it was anything but typical. It was emotional, spiritual and joyous.

As Rodríguez walked up and down the aisles of the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola, he could feel the support and love offered. The priests seated in the west side of the cathedral clapped, pointed and cheered. Those gathered in the overflow area of the chapel waved exuberantly.

And the rest of the people in the pews, who represented the many ethnicities, ages and cultures of the diocese, let their voices of welcome boom and snapped photos

on their cellphones as their new prelate passed.

His journey to Palm Beach started humbly — as a boy from Moca, a town in the north central part of the Dominican Republic where he was formed in the school of Don Bosco. Ordained a priest in 2004 in Santo Domingo, he was later incardinated into the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, where he served for 17 years.

And now he is in southeast Florida, the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach and second tallest prelate of Florida — by only an inch or two.

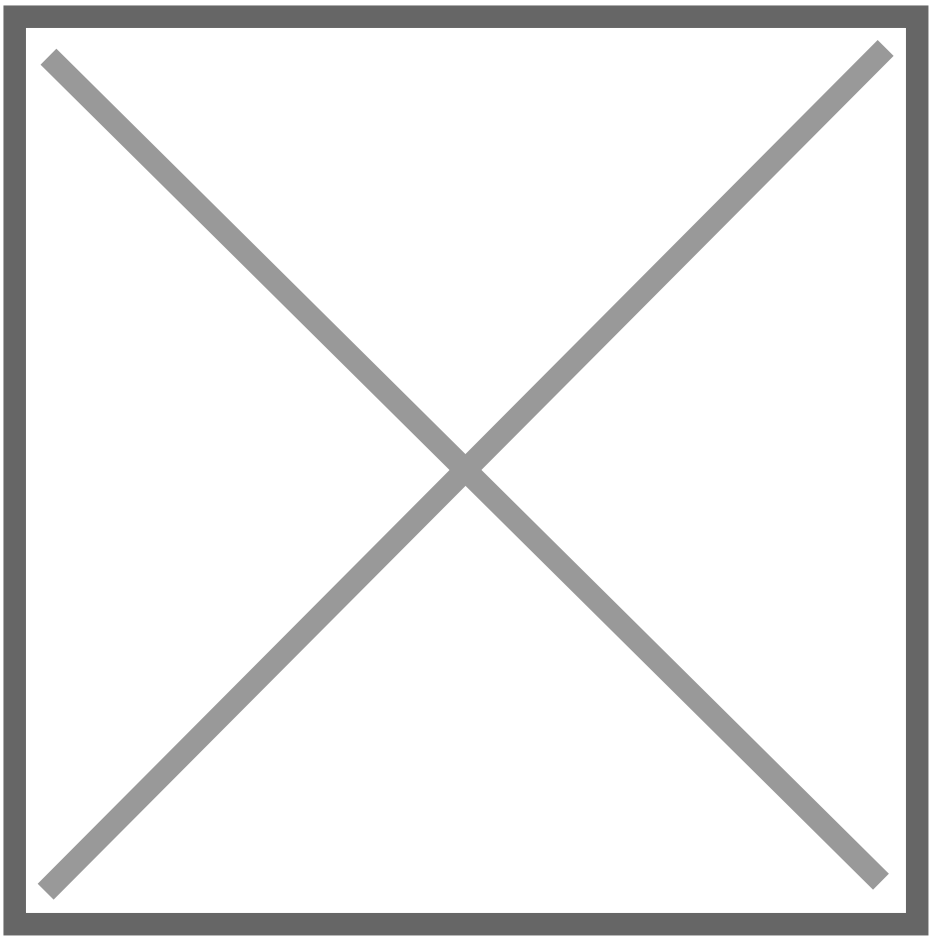
The Feb. 24 ordination Mass gathered some 1,000 people filling the pews of the Palm Beach Gardens cathedral, including family and friends of the ordained who traveled from the Dominican Republic. Hundreds more faithful stood outside the cathedral, many of whom were part of the Neocatechumenal Way of Orlando, Venice and Miami.

A procession of Knights of Columbus, Knights and Dames of Malta, Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, and hundreds of deacons and priests who serve in the diocese, bishops from across Florida, the United States and Central and South America walked with the bishop-elect into the cathedral.

Among the bishops to lay hands upon the new bishop were all of Florida's prelates — his predecessor, now-retired Bishop Gerald Barbarito, Bishop William Wack of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Bishop Erik Pohlmeier of St. Augustine, Bishop Gregory Parkes of St. Petersburg (who stands at 6-foot-8), Bishop John Noonan of Orlando, Bishop Frank Dewane of Venice, and from Miami, Archbishop Thomas Wenski and Auxiliary Bishop Enrique Delgado.

Among the many other prelates present were Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, Bishop Robert Brennan of Brooklyn and Archbishop Hector Rafael Rodríguez of Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic.

Following the papal proclamation, Wenski, who ordained Rodríguez, offered remarks in which he said the Palm Beach Diocese is a perfect fit for the priest from Hispaniola.



Members of the Vietnamese community prepare to offer the gifts to Bishop Manuel de Jesús Rodríguez during his ordination and installation Mass at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Feb. 24, 2026. Rodríguez, previously the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in the Corona section of the New York borough of Queens, was ordained and installed as the sixth bishop of Palm Beach. (OSV News/Florida Catholic/Jean Gonzalez)

"The Gold Coast of Florida has been described as the sixth borough of New York City," Wenski said to laughs. "So, Bishop Rodríguez will quickly come to feel like home here among the palm trees and warm breezes that will also remind him of the Dominican Republic, the land of his birth."

"I am sure your heart is filled with mixed emotions as you prepare to be ordained," the archbishop told the bishop-designate. "And in these past few weeks, as the Holy Father made his wishes known to you, you might be asking yourself, 'Why did he choose me to be a bishop?' I will just say to you, don't worry. In a few years, you'll be looking at us (fellow bishops) and ask, 'How did they become bishops?'"

Said in gest, the comment garnered chuckles and applause, most notable from the prelates in the sanctuary. He continued to say how, since the new shepherd stands at 6 feet, 6 inches, he "certainly is a high priest." Yet, the archbishop added with sincerity, "With God's grace and (the faithful's) support and prayers, he will not be in over his head" in his episcopal ministry.

Wenski took a moment to give thanks to Barbarito.

"Thank you, Gerry, for your years of service to the people of Palm Beach. Take holy pride in your stewardship in this diocese. Your work here for the church of Palm Beach has borne much good fruit. And your priestly example and your priestly integrity has brought much healing to this local church," the archbishop said, followed by a standing ovation.

Wenski said Palm Beach's new bishop will strive to live out his vocation for the good of his flock through teaching, sanctifying and governing, inspiring charity and celebrating the sacraments. All done to remind all that God does matter and establish a future of hope.

Along with applause, laughs and joy, the Mass was filled with solemn traditions. It served as an example of the diverse diocese, as members of different cultural communities participated in the liturgy through song, readings and dance. Members of the Vietnamese community brought up the gifts and offered a liturgical dance.

The ordination was not without its innocent mishaps — one that involved the bishop's miter. Not only is Bishop Rodríguez a tall man, but he seems to possess a head slightly bigger than his miter. It fell off his head a couple of times, much to the delight of the congregation, who recognized the very human moment as endearing.

Rodríguez seemed to take those moments in stride. When students from area Catholic schools brought up the gifts, he greeted them individually. Meeting the last two students, he bent down to offer a blessing and his miter fell. But once he secured it, he stood in front of the congregation with outreached arms, one holding his crozier, the other pointing to his headwear as if saying, "No worries. I got it."

Then he went to the front pew and greeted his mother, Dulce, other family members and religious sisters visiting from the Dominican Republic. And when he bent down for an embrace, the miter fell again. Again, there were chuckles, and again he offered a smile and laugh.

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At vespers the evening before, Bishop Brennan of Brooklyn remarked how the faithful of Palm Beach will almost immediately recognize Rodríguez's boundless energy with a voice that sometimes can be booming with exuberance.

And the new bishop revealed that in his opening line of remarks: "How beautiful it is just to be Catholic! How beautiful it is to walk in the path of Christ among so many beloved brothers and sisters! And how beautiful is the Diocese of Palm Beach!"

"From this day forward, until the Lord wills otherwise, I am your bishop and you are my people, united for the sake of the one faith we profess as members of the family of Jesus Christ," the bishop said. "And together we remain sheep of the one flock shepherded by Him. Therefore, though ordained today as a bishop, I must always 'smell like the sheep,' as our unforgettable Pope Francis so often reminded us."

Rodríguez recognized the "loving pastoral care and gracious heart" of Barbarito, who along with the clergy, religious and laity have "experienced the renewing power of that love."

"We must now continue advancing along that same path, knowing that Christ Jesus, Love of all loves, inspires and sustains our journey. We cannot stand still, for we are the Body of Christ here in Palm Beach," Rodríguez said. "We are such a Church — dynamic, passionate, courageous and unafraid of renewal."

He added that through "our apostolic boldness," there is much work to do — celebrate the sacraments more abundantly and live a life of charity more intensely "by visiting the sick and the imprisoned, assisting the poor, accompanying immigrants, educating children and young people in the faith, and listening to and caring for our elderly."

He concluded by speaking to different members of the faithful. Letting his priests and deacons know he is there for them and "they are his brothers and children." Reminding seminarians that they are the "great joy and hope" of the church.

"St. John Bosco promised his boys three things: bread, work and paradise. I will add two more: good health and car insurance — and many followers on Instagram," the bishop said.

He told parents that families are his "highest priority and deepest concern." And to youth and children, he said they would do great things together because they are "peace troops and our troops of joy and hope. Jesus blesses you."

And to immigrants, he said, "As Pope Francis and Pope Leo have reminded us, in the Church there are no foreigners or immigrants — only brothers and sisters." It was a phrase followed by extended applause, as did another remark about immigrants: "We are a church that is truly catholic. We have no boundaries. In this church, the true flag is the love of Jesus Christ."