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Guided by the Holy Spirit

Bishop Jugis, priests honored for years of service

by KEVIN E. MURRAY

editor

CHARLOTTE — Bishop Peter J. Jugis was recently honored for the 25th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Bishop Jugis, who celebrated his anniversary June 12, and 11 other priests celebrating jubilee anniversaries were recognized during a Mass at the bi-annual priests' convocation in Asheville June 10.

Also recognized was Father James Hawker, vicar of education and pastor of St. Luke Church in Mint Hill, who is retiring in July.

A native of Charlotte, Bishop Jugis graduated from South Mecklenburg High School in 1975 and, while studying accounting at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, began to contemplate a life as a priest.

“I just began to realize my heart wasn't in the accounting field,” said Bishop Jugis in a 2003 interview with The Catholic News & Herald. “I could do it intellectually, but I just didn't feel that this was what I wanted to give my life to totally.”

After a year of discernment and after talking with several priests and then-Bishop Michael J. Begley, and with encouragement from his parents, Bishop Jugis applied to be a seminarian of the diocese in 1979.

He studied at the North American College, the U.S. seminary in Rome, and was ordained by Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 12, 1983.

Then-Father Jugis served at numerous parishes across the 46-county Diocese of Charlotte, including St. Leo the Great Church in Winston-Salem, Holy Infant Church in Reidsville, St. John Neumann Church in Charlotte, Sacred Heart Church in Salisbury, Queen of the Apostles Church in Belmont and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Monroe.

In November 1985 he was appointed as a diocesan tribunal judge, and in August 1987 began studies for his doctorate in canon law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

In 1992, Bishop Jugis became the first priest of the diocese to receive a doctorate in canon law. Six years later, he began working full-time for the diocesan tribunal while regularly serving as administrator or pastor in churches around the diocese.

It was in July 2003 that Archbishop Gabriel Mantalvo, then-papal nuncio to the United States, called to tell him he was appointed the next bishop of Charlotte. It was a humbling moment — one that brought him to his knees, recalled Bishop Jugis.

When he was ordained and installed as the fourth bishop of Charlotte at St. Matthew Church in Charlotte Oct. 24, 2003 at the age of 46, he was one of the youngest bishops in the United States.

Being a bishop is a tremendous responsibility, said Bishop Jugis.

“I try not to think of the enormity of the task, but just want to serve the best that I can, and let the Holy Spirit guide and show me what has to be done,” he said.

“It is a special grace and a blessing to be chosen as a bishop where I’ve already served, where I’ve really spent all of my life,” said Bishop Jugis. “I was one of the priests helping to build up the diocese. Now I’m building up the diocese in a different way as bishop.”

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Priests celebrating jubilee priestly anniversaries in 2008:

Celebrating 60 years

Jesuit Father William Lynch

Celebrating 55 years

Father Joseph Kelleher

Msgr. Thomas Walsh

Benedictine Father Kenneth Geyer

Celebrating 50 years

Father Richard McCue

Jesuit Father Vincent de Paul Alagia

Benedictine Father David Kissinger

Redemptorist Father Edward Gray

Franciscan Capuchin Father Jude Duffy

Celebrating 25 years

Bishop Peter J. Jugis

Father John Hanic

Father John Schneider