

Bishop Peter J. Jugis received in his cathedral church

Bishop stresses importance of prayer, faith in God

by KEVIN E. MURRAY

editor

CHARLOTTE -- It was standing room only at Bishop Peter J. Jugis' first Mass in his cathedral church.

Bishop Jugis, ordained one day earlier as bishop of the Diocese of Charlotte, celebrated his rite of reception in St. Patrick Cathedral Oct. 25.

"On this happy and joyful day, we are happy, excited and very proud to welcome you to your cathedral church of St. Patrick," said Father Paul Gary, rector of St. Patrick, to Bishop Jugis. "We promise you our love, our prayers, our obedience, and we pray that the Lord may give you many wonderful, fruitful years as the fourth bishop of Charlotte."

"I think he's going to be a wonderful bishop," said Joyce Toomey, one of the original parishioners of St. Patrick Cathedral, consecrated in September 1939. "I'm thrilled that he's going to be here."

Concelebrating the Mass with Father Gary was Benedictine Abbot Placid Solari, abbot of Belmont Abbey; Father Lawrence LoMonaco, parochial vicar of St. Patrick; Bishop William G. Curlin, bishop emeritus of Charlotte, Msgr. Mauricio W. West, diocesan administrator since Bishop Curlin's retirement in September 2002; and other priests of the diocese.

Assisting were Rev. Mr. Carlos Medina and Rev. Mr. Nicholas Fadero, permanent deacons of the cathedral.

Before processing into the cathedral, Bishop Jugis sprinkled the congregation with holy water from the baptismal font. He then took his place on the cathedra, the bishop's seat, and received a round of applause from the congregation.

Bishop Jugis thanked the cathedral clergy, staff and parish for their gracious welcome to him. He then acknowledged the priests, deacons and seminarians in attendance, as well as parishioners from churches at which he had previously served, including Our Lady of Lourdes in Monroe, Queen of the Apostles in Belmont and St. Leo the Great in Winston-Salem.

Bishop Jugis also expressed his gratitude to Bishop Curlin, who acted "as spiritual director for the people of our diocese, helping us and guiding us in the ways of holiness ... and fixing our sights on Jesus."

Reiterating some of his remarks from his ordination Mass, Bishop Jugis stressed the importance of prayer and faith.

"All of this is the work of the Holy Spirit, and anything we do for Christ in the church has to spring from prayer," he said. "I trust, as we all do, in the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit in all that we do for our Lord."

Bishop Jugis said our souls are searching for God, whether we know it or not, and Jesus is "calling you every day in every moment of your day to take courage to get up and follow him."

"Without faith, our intellect cannot understand the mysteries of our faith," said Bishop Jugis. "Without the help of God's grace, it is beyond our comprehension. Faith sheds light on our intellect ... Faith puts us into union with God and orients our entire life in the direction of Heaven, and focuses all of our energies to achieve that goal -- heaven, eternal life."

Bishop Jugis asked the congregation how much time they spend "nourishing" their faith with prayer, spiritual and Bible readings and at Mass "compared to the time spent reading novels, magazines, newspapers and watching television."

"The more novels, magazines and newspapers I read and television I watch, my thoughts and my speech begin to be indistinguishable from the media at large," he said. "But the closer I stay to Christ, in prayer, with Mass and spiritual readings, the more my faith grows and I stay oriented in the direction of eternal life."

Speaking of the day's Gospel reading, Bishop Jugis said, "The first few sentences spoken to the man by the roadside leaving Jericho are fresh and full of life for us today. 'Your faith has saved you. Take courage. Get up. Jesus is calling you.'"