

The Florida Catholic

Pensacola-Tallahassee Edition front page story

Bishop Holley says goodbye to Pensacola

By **Peggy DeKeyser**, Pensacola

It's hard to say "Goodbye," so Bishop Martin D. Holley has been making the rounds simply saying, "I'll see you later," as he prepares to leave Pensacola for Washington, D.C.

Bishop Holley returned to Pensacola shortly after his episcopal ordination on July 2. He has been packing, taking care of administrative details and trying to squeeze in some rest and recreation before he takes on a very full schedule on his return to Washington.

Bishop Holley celebrated July 11 as a new bishop at a special Mass of thanksgiving at Little Flower Parish, where he served as administrator and pastor for the past four years. Along with gratitude to the Holy Spirit for his call to serve as auxiliary bishop of Washington, Bishop Holley offered prayers of thanksgiving for all those who had played a role in his vocation, most especially his parents and his family. At the conclusion of Mass, Bishop Holley thanked the parish for its gift to him of his pectoral cross. He also thanked all who had remembered him with gifts. Following Mass, the Ladies' Sodality hosted a reception in the school cafeteria.

A spirit of family and home pervaded St. Joseph Church in Pensacola July 16 at a celebration coordinated by the newly formed African-American Catholic Commission of the diocese and the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver.

Bishop Holley was born in Our Lady of Angels Hospital, now Our Lady's Chapel adjacent to St. Joseph's, and attended St.



TFC PHOTO BY PEGGY DEKEYSER

Honor Bell and Bishop Martin D. Holley stand with a picture of the Black Madonna and Child, presented to Bishop Holley at the July 16 celebration at St. Joseph Church, on behalf of the African-American Catholic community of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

Joseph School in seventh and eighth grades.

The St. Joseph's children's choir, under the direction of Derrick Myrick, and the St. Joseph choir, with Gabriel Brown directing, sang traditional gospel hymns throughout the service.

In welcoming all to the celebration, St. Joseph pastor Father Patrick Foley said, "We lift up our hearts in his word, and in song and music and prayer tonight, in praise to God our Father, for giving us and for taking away from us our beloved Bishop Martin Holley."

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ, expressed "deepest gratitude" to God for "extending this honor not only to him (Bishop Holley) and to his family, but to the entire diocese, and for the presbyterate of the church of Pensacola-Tallahassee."

Bishop Ricard also asked that, "You, Almighty God, might give him your grace and your guidance as he looks forward to a very important, very grave, and very responsible position as he serves the needs of our nation's capital — the District of Columbia."

Bishop Ricard again referenced the seriousness of the role Bishop Holley will assume when he said, "Serving as vicar bishop for our nation's capital is an ominous responsibility. Hopefully, he'll mostly have to deal with the spiritual dimension, and not the political.

"Whatever challenges he faces though, he will be sheltered by the Gospel of Jesus, as he was during his ordination when the deacons held the Book of Gospels like a tent above his head. And he will always know that we are praying for him back home, and that he always has a place with us when he needs a respite from the awesome responsibilities he will bear," he said.

"Martin Holley has done us a great favor," Bishop Ricard continued.

"When asked to leave this diocese, to leave the comfort and security of Little Flower, to leave his family and go far from home to face — not nice, quiet, safe, tranquil Pensacola — but the confusion that is D.C., when he was told that he was going to do all that, as God spoke through the voice of the Holy Father, Martin Holley didn't hesitate. He accepted the summons of the Holy Spirit.

"He willingly set an example for each one of us, because this same Spirit that called Martin Holley calls to each one of us. He leaves us with a great example of selflessness, of self-giving and dedication," Bishop Ricard said.

In his closing remarks, Bishop Holley thanked the people of the diocese and added "I need your prayers."

He also challenged those present with the need to each answer his or her own call from the Holy Spirit. "We all have the same Spirit — to follow in his footsteps and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, to evangelize. An evangelizer is someone who lives the word of God, each and every day.

"As I leave you to serve the people of the Archdiocese (of Washington), I promise to you that I will continue to try to live my life like Jesus, and to try to encourage others to do the same," Bishop Holley concluded. "There will be daunting tasks, and I know that I will be tested. But I know that the Lord will be with me. And I know how to get on a plane to come home to visit."

St. Paul Parish also celebrated with Bishop Holley with a special Thanksgiving Mass and reception July 18. Bishop Holley served as parochial vicar there from 1992 to 2000.

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