



Ecclesia

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PEMBROKE

A day of brilliance, warmth and solemn celebration

The brilliance of the sunshine outside was matched only by the brightness of Bishop Michael Mulhall's smile as he greeted the people of the Ottawa Valley as their new spiritual leader.

St. Columbkille's Cathedral was filled to overflowing for the nearly three-hour ordination ceremony on September 21, with approximately 150 dignitaries joining the parishioners for the occasion.

"May you proclaim the Word of God with unfailing patience and sound teaching," said Archbishop Luigi Ventura, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, in his homily.

"Your new ecclesial family has already warmly welcomed you," he added.

September 21 marks the Feast of St. Matthew, and Archbishop Ventura's homily was based on the Gospel of St. Matthew, which concludes with the great commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

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Above, Bishop Mulhall with some of the many visiting bishops, waiting for the entrance procession. At right, our newly ordained bishop is applauded by the congregation, with his parents, Maureen and Vernon, in the front row.



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“This is the mission that the Lord issues today and entrusts to you as the Bishop of Pembroke,” Archbishop Ventura said.

“Through your ministry, we pray that all will experience His presence – the eternal Shepherd who never leaves his flock untended.”

“A bishop does not dispose of the truth as if it were his own possession,” Archbishop Ventura noted, adding that, like St. Matthew, a bishop is to allow himself to be overtaken by the mission of Jesus as “a living person who knows us, encounters us and seeks to inspire us with His love.”

“I feel deeply humbled today to be chosen,” Bishop Mulhall said in his first address to the diocese.

Referring to the significance of the Feast of St. Matthew, the new bishop said: “I have felt a strong

and consoling intercession both from the apostle and from our first bishop. I join with all of you in expressing my deepest gratitude to the Lord who has called me to the grace of one baptism in the one holy Catholic and apostolic faith.”

“May the growth of His people in holiness be my abiding and my eternal joy,” he concluded.

The reception in the church hall following the formalities was a scene of joyous chaos. Members of the Pembroke Diocese anxiously gathered to get to know their new bishop, while those who knew him from previous placements were just as keen to wish him well. Hundreds of people mingled and celebrated together, their voices punctuated by laughter and, at one point, the harmonies of a beautiful Byzantine blessing sung by a contingent from Madonna House.

Bishop Mulhall’s broad smile captured the spirit of

the day as he took a few moments to reflect on the beauty of the ceremony and its historic significance.

“It’s been passed on to us because of what it says to us,” he commented.

Turning to the future, he shared his fondest hope for the days ahead: “Simply that we live our faith and hand on our faith and are joyful in doing that, and that we live to the fullest – that we find sanctity in what we do, and that we offer that for our salvation and the salvation of so many others. If there’s a goal, it’s the salvation of all of us which was given to us.”

Speaking for the entire diocese, Father Patrick Tait had earlier shared the highest hope of all in attendance, “may God bless you and keep you with us for many, many years,” he said, inspiring prolonged and enthusiastic applause from the congregation.

Below, Bishop Mulhall meets with parishioners following his ordination. Right, he makes his first remarks as Bishop of Pembroke.



Service divided between Peterborough and Rome

To date, Bishop Mulhall’s service to the Catholic Church has been rooted in two locations – his home diocese of Peterborough, and Rome.

Following his ordination to the priesthood for the Diocese of Peterborough in 1989, Bishop Mulhall returned to Rome to further pursue his religious studies at the Augustinianum while following the formation program at the North American College.

In obtaining his Licentiate of Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) there, Bishop Mulhall embarked on a two-year program that provides opportunity to treat theological questions in greater depth and pursue a more scientific study of theology. Graduates of the program are prepared to teach theology in a college, seminary or university, or to function as a chaplain to various professional groups, or to act as a theological resource for a diocese.

Bishop Mulhall returned to the Peterborough Diocese in 1991 and served as a priest in Huntsville until 1994.

He made a third move to Rome in 1994, to serve as an official of the Holy See in the Congregation for

Oriental Churches. Established by Pope Benedict XV in 1917, the mandate is to be in contact with the Oriental Catholic churches for the sake of assisting their development, protecting their rights and maintaining the heritage of the various Oriental Christian traditions. Its role includes exclusive authority over such regions as: Egypt and the Sinai peninsula, Cyprus, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Turkey. The responsibilities reflect the complex reality of the Oriental churches with respect to their geographical, cultural and social conditions.

In 2002, Bishop Mulhall returned to his native diocese, serving again briefly in Huntsville and then in Hastings.

A year later, he was given added responsibilities as chancellor for spiritual affairs and in 2004 he took on the duties of vicar general of the diocese. He occupied these positions until June 30 of this year, when he was appointed Bishop of Pembroke by Pope Benedict XVI.



Right, Bishop Mulhall with his father, Vernon, on the day he was ordained to the priesthood in 1989.

Ordination mass is a living history

The ordination of Bishop Michael Mulhall was rich in historical connections. It was exactly 125 years earlier - on September 21, 1882 - that Pembroke's first bishop, Narcisse Zepherin Lorrain was ordained.

Two physical elements created a tangible connection between the two ceremonies. The crozier received by Bishop Mulhall was the same pastoral staff presented to Bishop Lorrain on the day of his ordination, and Bishop Mulhall also chose to honour Bishop Lorrain by using his chalice in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

September 21 was also the 182nd anniversary of the dedication of Bishop Mulhall's home parish, The Cathedral of St. Peter-in-Chains, in Peterborough, Ontario.

Bishop Mulhall's first mass at St. Columbkille's Cathedral, held on September 30, was also rich in historical significance. Bishop Mulhall blessed the new statue of St. Columbkille and the new baptismal font installed at the entrance to the cathedral last month, photo below. These new additions to St. Columbkille's commemorate the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral.



Peterborough Diocese is sorry to lose Bishop Mulhall

Representatives of the Diocese of Peterborough were approaching the ordination ceremony in Pembroke with rather mixed emotions.

"I was hoping for Monsignor Mulhall to stay another couple of years," admits Bishop Nicola De Angelis with a chuckle.

"He will make a great bishop," the Peterborough diocesan leader quickly adds.

Bishop De Angelis can readily list the attributes of the new bishop of Pembroke.

"He's very respectful, intelligent, very clear in his planning," he says. "He can apply the canon law with a pastoral touch and compassion."

And if our new bishop has one weakness, it is only to be found in the strength of the coffee he brews. Bishop De Angelis reports that he will not miss having to clean out the mountains of coffee grounds Bishop Mulhall regularly used.

Father Raymond Rick will be stepping into Bishop Mulhall's role as vicar general of the Peterborough Diocese. The duties include managing the day-to-day operations of the diocese - a post somewhat equivalent to a chief executive officer in the business world.

Father Rick admits to being a bit intimidated in taking up Bishop Mulhall's job.

"He's able to keep a lot of things in mind at once," he says, noting that he too would have preferred to keep Bishop Mulhall in Peterborough.

"I consider him to be one of my better personal friends," Father Rick says, explaining that they first met in Rome around 1990 when Bishop Mulhall was a student in the North American College there.

The qualities that make him a good friend include his intelligence, his fun-loving and easy-going nature, and his droll sense of humour.

As a fellow priest, Bishop Mulhall's finest qualities include his strong sense of the church's tradition and history.

Bishop Mulhall will make responsible decisions following much thought and prayer, Father Rick predicts. "He takes his time to ponder matters carefully," he says.

"When he's made a decision, you know that he will do it because it's good and he's thought about it," agrees a fellow priest who knows Bishop Mulhall well.

A dedicated and thoughtful friend

Father Brian Welding is one of the many participants who traveled great miles to celebrate the ordination of Bishop Michael Mulhall.

As he prepared to make the journey from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Father Welding reflected on a friendship that has spanned two decades since the two young men met in seminary at the North American College in Rome.

"I recognized right away that he was a man of prayer," Father Welding recalls.

"He has a wonderful theological formation," he adds. "He always had a great love for the priesthood."

Father Welding also describes a man who is keenly interested in the world around him. Bishop Mulhall developed a great interest in European history during his time in Rome. He loved to read about the lives of those who had lived there before him, including the biographies of the Popes who had led the Catholic Church throughout the years. He also took a great interest in the church of the Middle Ages and the post-reformation period.

In Canada, he pursued an equally avid interest in the history of the early missionaries who traveled this country. He has already noted to friends that he will

be living on one of those earliest missionary routes that carried the Jesuits to Canada's native populations.

"He certainly appreciates the Canadian countryside and the beauty of nature," Father Welding says.

The bishop's love of the outdoors promises to make his time in the Pembroke Diocese very enjoyable. Downhill skiing is another leisure activity he can pursue within the diocese.

Father Welding is quick to note that Bishop Mulhall's love of books, academics and the outdoors does not keep him from being a "people person".

"He's a serious person in many ways, and at the same time he likes life and enjoys people," Father Welding comments. "He's not pretentious in any way. There is not a pretentious bone in his body."

And finally, Father Welding confidently predicts that Bishop Mulhall will be a thoughtful and dependable leader of the church.

"He is a man who knows the needs of the church and has a sense of the needs of the future," he concludes. "I would describe him as a man of vision, a very thoughtful man."



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Mulhall family is “humbled and overwhelmed” as they join in Pembroke celebrations

The ordination of Bishop Michael Mulhall is a natural and delightful extension of his dedication to his vocation, according to family members.

“We’re just humbled by it and overwhelmed,” says the new bishop’s mother, Maureen Mulhall. “It’s not a thing that you’re proud of. It’s something very much beyond us.”

Bishop Mulhall’s involvement in the church began as an altar boy at St-Peter-In-Chains Cathedral in Peterborough. Like his two brothers, and their father before them, he was encouraged to take an active role and serve the priests at the congregational masses.

The family, which also includes two sisters, has always been active in the Peterborough parish. Their father, Vernon, who is now retired, was a professional engineer and chemist for General Electric. Their mother worked as a teacher before she married, and was a full-time at-home mother.

The five Mulhall siblings share a love of learning that was instilled from an early age by their parents. They also maintain the strong connections of a traditional Irish family.

“They were all blessed with intelligence,” says Mrs. Mulhall. She adds that she and her husband nurtured their children’s God-given talents and encouraged each of them to always do the best they could, and to be thankful.

The parents’ primary message for the Mulhall children was to keep things in their proper perspective.

“The spiritual things come before everything else,” Mrs. Mulhall concludes.

For young Michael, it was a lesson easily learned. A naturally quiet and reflective child, he had the gift of always being content with himself and his surroundings of the time, whatever they might be. While he could be playful and was certainly not dull, there was an undercurrent of seriousness in the way he approached life.

Bishop Mulhall blossomed when he found the opportunity to focus on the spiritual during his studies at Trent University. It was in the philosophy department there that he encountered a professor with a special interest in Thomistic philosophy. Seeing the future bishop’s aptitude and keen interest, the professor worked with him on a one-on-one basis for the entire year.

Philosophy, religion and the theoretical aspect of science were Bishop Mulhall’s primary areas of interest during the course of his post-secondary education.

When he decided to become a priest, Bishop Mulhall was following in the footsteps of an uncle he had long admired – Father John Joseph Hickey who served in the Peterborough Diocese.

Father Hickey was not able to travel to Pembroke for Bishop Mulhall’s ordination ceremony, but all who know him are certain that he was there in spirit. We can also be sure that he is just as pleased today as he was when he traveled to Rome for his nephew’s ordination as a deacon.

While his parents were not surprised by his decision to enter the priesthood, they were taken a bit off guard when the young man who had always lived at home announced that he would be moving to Rome.

While his siblings left home earlier in life to study at St. Michael’s College in Toronto, Bishop Mulhall completed his full education in Peterborough, beginning with St. Theresa’s Catholic School and progressing through St. Peter’s Catholic High School to Trent where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in 1985.

Though he had not appeared to be a traveler by nature, he adapted well to life in Rome.

He pursued theological studies there at the Angelicum, where he obtained his Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) in 1988, and at the Augustinianum, where he received his Licentiate of Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) in 1991 while following the formation program at the North American College.

Bishop Mulhall was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Peterborough on July 21, 1989.

Below, Bishop Mulhall, flanked by his parents, with Pope John Paul II. Below left, the Mulhall family - from left to right, John, Sheilagh, Henry, Mary and Michael. Upper left, Bishop Mulhall was ordained to the Diaconate in Rome in 1989.

