



Metuchen welcomes its sixth shepherd

By Christina Leslie
Contributing Editor

The people of Metuchen were overjoyed to welcome the Most Reverend Michael Arsenio Saporito as their sixth Bishop during an installation Mass held Oct. 22 in Sacred Heart Parish, South Plainfield. Representatives from parishes, schools, religious, lay and civil organizations were joined by clergy and civil dignitaries from throughout the state and beyond to witness the newest shepherd of the central New Jersey diocese.

Steeped in beauty and symbolism, the reception of the Bishop Designate be-

gan with his knock on the center door of the church. It was opened from within by Father Jonathan S. Toborowsky, diocesan administrator; Father Timothy A. Christy, Cathedral rector, and Father Edmund A. Luciano, pastor of the host parish, on behalf of the clergy, religious and faithful of the Diocese. Father Toborowsky presented Bishop-Designate Saporito with a crucifix resting upon a pillow to reverence, then he sprinkled holy water on those in the narthex. Numerous bishops of New Jersey joined other clergy in the procession, including Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M. of Trenton; Bishop Kevin J. Sweeney of Paterson; Bishop

Joseph A. Williams of Camden, and Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR, of Newark.

His Excellency the Most Reverend Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, read the papal mandate from Pope Leo XIV naming Bishop Saporito the spiritual head of the Metuchen Diocese. Archbishop Caccia noted that the Mass coincided with the feast day of St. Pope John Paul II, who established the Diocese 45 years ago.

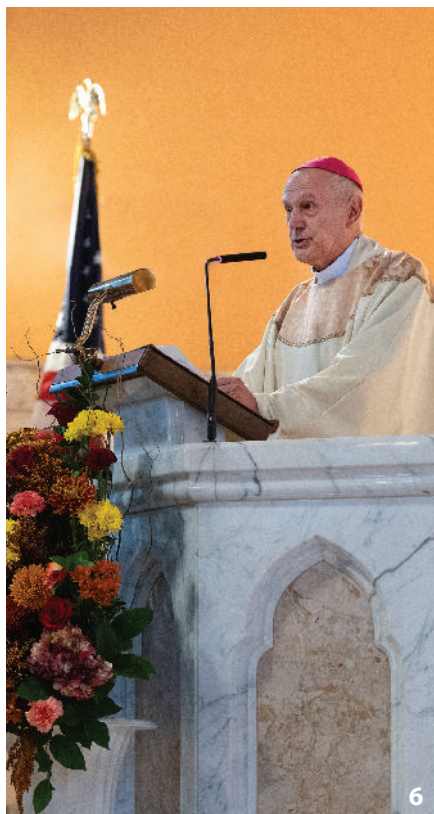
Bishop Saporito, smiling broadly, presented the mandate to the Diocesan College of Consultors, then, holding it aloft, walked throughout the church so

that the faithful might see the Pope's declaration up close. The bishops in the sanctuary extended a sign of peace, then Archbishop Caccia and Cardinal Tobin presented the new Bishop of Metuchen his cathedra and crozier.

Bishop Saporito began his homily recalling the advice by St. Pope John Paul II at his Oct. 22, 1978, inaugural Mass in St. Peter's Square: Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ. The bishop's own motto was inspired by the Gospel of John wherein Jesus had eaten breakfast with them and told them: Feed My Sheep.

"Our mission together in proclaim-





6 - Most Reverend Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States



ing the Good News ... allows us to focus on three things: the meal, the mercy, and the mission," said the Bishop. "Jesus used meals as places of encounter with others, he shared food and opened his heart, [and] here the word is proclaimed." The meal, or Eucharist "fills our hearts and lives, joins us as one family, takes what we have received and offers it to the world... Jesus sought to touch people's hearts, and so must we."

Mercy, the Bishop continued, "frees us from shackles of our own sins. During the Jubilee Year of Mercy, my own sense of mercy expanded. We come to Jesus in distress, profound suffering, brokenness,

and misery, and he offers freedom and redemption regardless of the baggage. I often picture the gaze of Jesus at Peter; that's why the song is entitled 'Amazing Grace': he lets yesterday go so we can embrace tomorrow with joy. We are not perfect, but all can stand tall by his grace."

Bishop Saporito cautioned the congregation not to simply fulfill the bare minimums of their faith, but rather to embrace the mission of holiness. "Purpose ignites a passion and a hope within us, for living and meaning and purpose all of our days. We know a better way, let's show others what we know, let's lead

others to what we know."

He continued, "It is not enough for us to simply maintain what we have, we must have a heart that aches for those who are missing... Become a Church that does not wait for people to find us, but we should risk leaving the shores of our own comfort and seek out the missing. The mission of the Church must go beyond those already here."

His voice rising in volume and intensity, Bishop Saporito issued a challenge to his new flock. Referring to his new ceremonial chair, or cathedra, he admitted, "Today I sit in a chair that is not mine to keep, but mine to steward, after

the command of Christ for a time. Let us take advantage of it together.

"My new sisters and brothers of Metuchen, let us set out together to be a people of the Eucharist, a people of Mercy and a people on a mission," he concluded. "The waiting is over, and responding to the call now begins. Let us not be afraid, let us open wide the doors to Christ. Amen?" he asked them. They answered with a loud, fervent, "AMEN!!" and resounding applause.



The Presentation of Bishop-Delegate Saporito & the reading of the Apostolic Mandate by Archbishop Caccia

At this time, the Cardinal will invite Bishop-Delegate Saporito forward as he prepares to listen, accept, and receive the Apostolic Mandate issued by His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church. The mandate will be read by His Excellency, Archbishop Caccia, who serves as the Holy Father's Apostolic Nuncio (Ambassador) to the United States of America.

The Acceptation and Presentation of the Apostolic Mandate

Archbishop Caccia presents the Mandate to Bishop Saporito, who accepts the Holy Father's mandate. He will show the Mandate to the Diocesan College of Consultors in the presence of Anthony P. Kearns III, the Chancellor, who serves as an official

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witness to the act and for record keeping. In doing so, Bishop Saporito is showing that he has taken canonical possession of the Diocese and is now the Bishop of Metuchen. Then, he will then show the Mandate to the Faithful of the Diocese and the people of good will present at this liturgy.

The Kiss of Peace

Afterwards, the Bishops present extend to the new Bishop of Metuchen a sign of peace. By this fraternal greeting, Bishop Saporito receives the love and support of his brother Bishops as he begins his new pastoral ministry.

The Installation of the Diocesan Bishop at his Cathedra & the Presentation of his Crozier

Archbishop Caccia and Cardinal Tobin will show Bishop Saporito to the Cathedra as he sits upon it as a visible sign of taking possession, representing his

role as Teacher and Leader of the Diocese. The crozier will then be presented to him, as another visible sign of taking possession, representing his role as Chief Shepherd of the Diocese and his pastoral authority of this Local Church of Metuchen.

Greeting of Bishop Saporito, the New Shepherd of the Diocese

Representatives of the clergy, religious, and laity from throughout the Diocese of Metuchen as well as those from other Christian and non-Christian communities greet Bishop Saporito as begins his ministry in this Diocese.

From this point forward, Bishop Saporito will preside over this liturgical celebration as the Principal Celebrant and begins his first public act as Bishop of Metuchen with celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the faithful of this Diocese he will shepherd.

—Photos by Mark Lee (1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10) and Hal Brown (3, 4, 5, 9)