

FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Bishop Joseph V. Adamec

June 11, 2007

TWENTY YEARS – THE WAIT

It is impossible for me to respond to the many cards and greetings that I am receiving on the occasion of my twentieth anniversary as your Diocesan Bishop. They have been a great source of support and encouragement to me. Please know that I am deeply grateful to all of you, - the clergy, religious, and faithful. I ask that you be so kind as to accept this as my thanks.

Those nine days following Archbishop Laghi's telephone call about the Holy Father assigning me to be the next Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown were very difficult. Both Bishop Hogan and Bishop Untener of Saginaw called soon after the Apostolic Nuncio hung up. However, I so wanted to talk with others about this significant change in my life. I was not allowed to do so until the announcement date, which Archbishop Laghi told me would be Saint Patrick's Day, March 17. Nor was I able to go shopping for bishop's clothes, as that would give it away. Yet, I knew that I would be expected to provide photos of me dressed as a bishop soon after the news broke.

Reluctantly, I was given permission to speak with certain key individuals. One was my parochial vicar. I told him that he would need to take over most of the responsibilities at the parish, as I would be about other things. He, of course, knew that the Apostolic Nuncio had called looking for me and surmised that it was not for the purpose of wishing me a good day. Some time within that waiting period, I told my brother who was wintering in Florida. That very day, he was scheduled to sign papers for a home to which he planned to move permanently. He generously cancelled the transaction upon hearing that I would be moving to Pennsylvania, so that one of us would remain in Michigan with our mother.

She was the challenge. How do you prepare your 93-year-old mother without "letting the cat out of the bag?" One day, as I was pushing her around Saint Francis Home in a wheelchair, I began talking to her about bishops. It did not take her long to ask, "Are you one?" What could I do but answer her that I was, but that she was not to tell anyone. She was pleased, as a mother would be. However, she was less pleased when she found out that I would be moving out of state. Her suggestion was for the Church to send the Bishop of Saginaw to Altoona-Johnstown and I could stay there. Mothers have those kinds of solutions.

Others had to wait for the news. That included my parish staff and friends. I remember a priest coming to visit. He did most of the talking, as my mind was elsewhere. The topic that I would have liked to share with him was "off the table." Later, he would say to me, "There I was, engaging in idle talk, and you were sitting on a miter!"

The day of announcement finally came. I had arranged for a 7:00 a.m. breakfast at the rectory for my staff "in honor of Saint Patrick." They thought it rather strange, and a number decided not to come to work that early. My parochial vicar had to threaten them. The news would be announced from Washington, D.C., at 6:00 a.m. I figured that no one in the parish would hear about it for at least an hour.

Upon hearing the news, the administrator of Saint Francis Home called rather concerned about my mother and asked, "How are we going to tell 'grandma'?" "Oh, don't worry," I said. "She knows." They could not believe that a mother could have kept such significant news to herself for those several days. I now know that she did so with a very heavy heart.