



Statement from The Most Rev. Ronald W. Gainer, 11th Bishop of Harrisburg

Good morning and thank you to our Diocesan center staff for gathering here this morning. Thank you also to the members of the media who are gathered here. You help us to spread the message of the Diocese beyond the walls of our churches, and I am grateful for your presence today.

There is a classic country song with the lyrics, “It seems like only yesterday, Gee ain’t it funny how time slips away.”

I think I might make those words my new my episcopal motto.

At least to me it does seem like only yesterday that I was sitting in this very room, for the announcement that Pope Francis had appointed me the Eleventh Bishop of Harrisburg. As you may know, the selection of a new bishop for a diocese is highly confidential until the official announcement is made. This has not happened in the Harrisburg Diocese since 1971 when Bishop George Leech retired – 52 years ago. The five bishops between Bishop Leech and me managed to exit by means other than retirement.

It may not have been completely under cover of darkness, but last evening I helped facilitate the “sneaking in” of my successor.

This is certainly a joyous day for our clergy, the religious and laity of our Diocese, for the members of our Diocesan staff and for me personally, and today’s announcement is one that we have been expecting for several months. As you may recall, in August of 2022, I reached my 75th birthday and following church law, I submitted my letter requesting retirement to the Holy Father. I know a great many people have been praying since then for the man who would be selected as our next bishop, and with today’s announcement, I know those prayers have been answered.

When it is known that a bishop is retiring, there is a good amount of speculation that takes place regarding his successor. On Sunday, April 16, the Sunday of Divine Mercy, I received a phone call from the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, that put an end to all the guesswork. I was very pleased when the Nuncio told me that the Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior, one of the Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, would be our next bishop in Harrisburg. The Feast of Divine Mercy will forever have a new significance for me.

I have known Bishop-designate Senior for more than 25 years and have full confidence that he will be a caring, faithful shepherd who will speak the truth with love and conviction, leading the Diocese of Harrisburg with the truths of the Church as a successor of the Apostles.

His experience as the Vicar General, the Vicar for Clergy, and the Secretary for Catholic Human Services in the Archdiocese give him a wealth of skills that will be invaluable to our Diocese. Bishop-designate Senior also comes to us with numerous skills in business administration and, as the Chancellor of Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, he has a comprehensive experience in the formation of those preparing for the Priesthood. In the many meetings we have had together I have witnessed his tremendous skills of administration, as well as his fatherly heart and compassion for those seminarian and faculty under his care.

A little side note, Bishop Senior is also a classically trained pianist. I'm confident that the music and singing at our diocesan staff Christmas party will be kicked up a few notches.

I am grateful to our Holy Father for sending the Diocese of Harrisburg a man devoted to living the demands of the Gospel. As we enter this new chapter in the history of the Harrisburg Diocese, I do so with confidence that the Offices of teaching, sanctifying and shepherding in our local Church are in the very best hands.

Now, it is my great privilege and honor to welcome the Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior, now designated as the Twelfth Bishop of Harrisburg.