Statement of Bishop Thomas Tobin
on the Appointment of Bishop Richard Henning
as the Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Providence
November 23, 2022

It is very appropriate that we gather today, on the day before Thanksgiving – the day when we pause to recall and to thank Almighty God for all of the gifts and blessings which he has given us. Today we have another wonderful blessing for which to be grateful – the appointment of Bishop Richard Henning as the Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Providence.

A coadjutor bishop is appointed in a diocese to assist the diocesan bishop, to actively share in the governance of the diocese, and to immediately succeed the diocesan bishop when his resignation from office, his retirement, is accepted.

I am most grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for approving my request to have a coadjutor bishop appointed for the Diocese of Providence. I am also grateful to the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, for his guidance and assistance during this process. And, on behalf of our entire diocesan family, we are grateful to the Diocese of Rockville Centre for sharing with us such a good, talented and faithful bishop like Bishop Henning.

Bishop Henning comes to us with very impressive academic credentials, with diverse pastoral experience, and with eagerness to listen, to learn and to lead. Bishop Henning is fully prepared to assume the leadership of the Diocese of Providence when that time comes – and I pray that will happen in the very near future!

I want to take a moment to note that today also marks the retirement of Bishop Robert Evans as Auxiliary Bishop of Providence. This moment carries mixed emotions for me, and for all of us in the Diocese.

I have known Bishop Evans for more than 50 years, since we were seminary classmates. And for almost 50 years now Bishop Evans has served the Diocese of Providence as a priest and, in the last 13 years, as a bishop. No one knows or loves the Diocese of Providence more than Bishop Evans and we are all deeply grateful for his ministry. He is deeply loved and highly respected in this Diocese. We are pleased that Bishop Evans will still be with us, offering prayerful support and liturgical and sacramental assistance – and occasionally an outstanding Italian meal if we treat him well!
Earlier this year we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the Diocese of Providence. And we know that in the history of the Church, and in each diocese, bishops and priests, as shepherds of God’s people, naturally will come and go. But Jesus is our Good Shepherd who remains with us always, loving and caring for his flock. For that reason, as we enter this time of transition in the Diocese of Providence, we embrace the future with total confidence, hope and joy. As the coming Advent Season reminds us, Jesus is Emmanuel, the “God who is with us,” always. And that gives us peace.

Bishop Henning, your biography says that you have a “lifelong passion for the water, sailing, boating and kayaking.” Well, there is no better place for you to be then, than here in the Ocean State. Welcome to Rhode Island! You will come to love the Diocese of Providence, and I know that you will be greatly loved in return. Bishop Henning, be assured of my personal friendship, my prayerful support, and my total cooperation as you begin writing this new chapter in your priestly life and ministry.

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