

12-17-07 - **Pilarczyk observes 25 years as head of Cincinnati archdiocese**

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Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk is observing the 25th anniversary of his installation as head of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, which includes 221 parishes and about 500,000 Roman Catholics in southwest Ohio.

He celebrated an invitation-only Mass at St. Peter in Chains Cathedral on Sunday, followed by a public reception at the Duke Energy Center.

In his homily, Pilarczyk expressed gratitude for the highs and lows of his tenure, and joked that he was tempted "to name names and settle scores." He made no direct mention of the church's sexual abuse scandal, priest shortage, closing parishes, consolidating schools, declining donations or rising costs.

Pilarczyk, 73, acknowledged critics "who were (or are) convinced that I am totally unsuited for the responsibilities I have been given." During the abuse scandal, victims accused him of failing to react quickly to allegations against priests.

"He demonstrated absolutely no compassion to sex abuse victims," said Dan Frondorf, co-leader of the Cincinnati chapter of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

Supporters said Pilarczyk, in fact, cares deeply about all parishoners.

"He has been guided by his faith," said the Rev. Paul Hurst of St. Bernard's in Springfield. "He believes God is with him. He has the faith all will turn out right by following the Lord."

In an interview, Pilarczyk said that, in retrospect, he believes allegations of abuse should have been handled more directly and more severely in the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

"You remove the priest from his office as soon as possible and you sort it out. We didn't do that," he said. "If you mess with a kid, you're out. That's what we should have done."