



Photo by Peter Finney Jr. | CLARION HERALD

New Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, left, received the fraternal support of his predecessor, Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, at Archbishop Aymond's Mass of Installation Aug. 20, 2009, at St. Louis Cathedral.

## A shepherd returns home



Archbishop Gregory M. **AYMOND**

**You were installed as Archbishop of New Orleans in August 2009. What have your four months been like?**

I have been very much touched, both emotionally and spiritually, by the warm welcome from everyone. It has been overwhelming. I am grateful to God and to the people of the archdiocese – clergy, religious and laity – for their warm welcome. It's been a busy time, but I'm not in any way complaining. That schedule has been of my own making, and I want to get around and visit as many parishes and people as I can to really get a sense of what's happening in the archdiocese. Here are my initial observations: We have very active and faith-filled parishes, and I've also been impressed by the dedication and eagerness to grow in the faith on the part of teenagers and those in youth ministry. I've also been very impressed by our commitment to Catholic schools and to parish religious education programs.

**You've said from the outset that you want to take at least 10 months to**

**get a good understanding of the various ministries of the archdiocese.**

I want to use these 10 months primarily to get around and see what is happening. I readily admit that as I get around, I have made assumptions about a certain situation – which I don't share with anybody – but then I realize that so much has changed in nine years that I've made the wrong assumptions. So, I'm having to learn a lot. I'm grateful for this time and for the patience of people as I get around to learn about what is happening and what has happened.

**But you have had to make some decisions, such as releasing the report in December on how the archdiocese will use its FEMA reimbursements to build schools and community centers.**

It's very important for me as archbishop and for our people in ministry that we are straightforward and transparent and see ourselves as good stewards of the gifts that God's people have given to us. That also applies to any sexual abuse cases – we have to be straightforward about that. I'm also grateful that healing is taking place at some of the parishes that have been closed, and I want to continue those dialogues in the new year and begin conversations with

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### Archbishop Alfred Hughes retires

Post-Katrina recovery marked his service as the 13th Archbishop of New Orleans, pages 4-5 >



### Closed parishes present challenges, opportunities

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### St. Anselm dedicates new church

Several other churches rededicated after post-Katrina renovations, pages 8-9 >