

Arecibo Diocese Gets First Bishop

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ARECIBO—Historic St. Philip's Cathedral, fronting on of this city's elm-shaded square, was filled to capacity yesterday for the solemn but colorful ceremonies that brought the newly created Arecibo Roman Catholic Diocese its first bishop.

The Most Rev. Alfredo T. Mendez, wearing white satin liturgical robes with green and gold trimmings, was installed by Archbishop James P. Davis of the San Juan Diocese.

A heavy downpour caused cancellation of a scheduled processional from the parish house to the cathedral. However a processional was formed from the back of the cathedral to the altar.

To the hymns of a large choir from the Aibonito Seminary, priests of the parish, followed by some 200 visiting priests filed

down the center aisle, leading the way for the Most Rev. Luis Aponte Martinez, titular bishop of Lares and auxiliary bishop of Ponce, Archbishop Davis, and finally Bishop Mendez.

Bishop Mendez, wearing a white pointed miter on his head that is symbolic of his new office, slowly moved down the aisle, stopped at the first pew, smiled and blessed his 85-year-old mother. He, then moved on to take a seat at the left of the altar.

The two-hour ceremonies were climaxed when Archbishop Davis, seated at the right of the altar, rose and beckoned Mendez, seated at the left, to him. He handed him his golden sepulcher and bade him sit in his place.

Mendez responded, and at that moment, he became Bishop of Arecibo. Next, the parish and visiting priests filed by to kiss

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his ring and receive his blessing.

Prior to the symbolic switching of chairs between Bishop Mendez and Archbishop Davis, a sermon was read by Archbishop Edward Byrne of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Archbishop Byrne, who ordained Mendez as a priest 25 years ago in San Juan, read the pontifical bull from a scroll. The Vatican document officially created the new diocese and made Mendez bishop.

In his sermon, Archbishop Byrne reminisced on his association over the years with the new bishop. Archbishop Byrne was the first bishop of Ponce when the diocese was created in 1927. He became bishop of San Juan in 1930, and then moved on to his present post in New Mexico.

Following the installation ceremonies Bishop Mendez said mass. Among those present were the

Most Rev. Richard Ackerman, bishop of Covington, Ky., Monsignor Juan de Dios Lopez of San Juan, Mrs. Adelina Gonzalez de Mendez, mother of the bishop, and Carmen Escudero Vda. de Angelet, godmother of the new bishop.

Bishop Mendez was consecrated in ceremonies held at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind., Oct. 28.

The new diocese will govern the spiritual lives of some 50,000 persons.