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Washington — March 28, 2018
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Pope Francis has appointed Dominican Fr. Robert Christian as an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

The appointment was announced in Washington March 28 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Since 2015, Christian, a native of San Francisco, has been master of students for the Dominicans' Western province. Earlier he was a college teacher, a professor and vice dean at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, also known as the Angelicum, and a lecturer at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone welcomed the new auxiliary bishop to his hometown, saying in a statement released by the archdiocese that the two had met while studying in Rome in the 1970s. "We are now all blessed that Bishop-elect Christian joins us to serve our priests, religious, deacons and all the people of the archdiocese," he said.

Christian said he was pleased to be returning home to minister among the people of San Francisco including many relatives and friends.

"I know I can count on the prayers of many people, and I am eager to serve the people of the city and archdiocese that I call home," he said in a statement.

His episcopal ordination was planned for early summer at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco.

Christian, 69, entered the Dominicans at St. Albert Priory in Oakland, California, in 1970 and made his solemn profession as a Dominican in 1974. He was ordained a priest in Oakland June 4, 1976.

After ordination, Christian started his teaching career at Dominican College in San Rafael, California. He later joined parish ministry at Blessed Sacrament Church in Seattle and was director of the Newman Center at the University of Washington.

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Christian returned to teaching in 1985 as professor of sacraments and ecclesiology at the Angelicum in Rome. For two years beginning in 1997, he served as "socius," similar to chief of staff, and vicar of the Dominicans' Western province while lecturing in theology at the Graduate Theological Union. From 1999 to 2014, he was vice dean and professor at the Angelicum.

Other appointments include peritus, or expert, at the 1990 Synod of Bishops on priestly formation, prior of the 75-member resident community of friars at the Angelicum, member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and, since 2013, consultor to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

He received a master of divinity degree from the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Oakland in 1977. Four years later, he earned a licentiate of sacred theology from the Angelicum followed by a doctorate in sacred theology from the same institution in 1984.