News



Archbishop-designate Carlos Castillo Mattasoglio, a professor of theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, speaks during a news conference in Lima Jan. 25, after Pope Francis named him archbishop of Lima. (CNS/Courtesy of Peruvian bishops' conference)

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of 75-year-old Peruvian Cardinal Juan Cipriani Thorne of Lima and has named a 68-year-old professor of theology to succeed him.

The appointment of Archbishop-designate Carlos Castillo Mattasoglio, a professor of theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, was announced by the Vatican Jan. 25 along with Cipriani's retirement.

Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno of Huancayo told Catholic News Service that the new archbishop is the type of church leader that Francis seeks, who is "more in tune with the poorest, most humble people."

As a theologian who also has worked in a low-income area of Lima, Castillo is "well educated and also very close to the people," Barreto said.

"Having a new archbishop with that profile brings the Peruvian conference of bishops much closer to the reality of the church of which we all dream, a church that is poor and for the poor," the cardinal said, "a church that reaches out, a church that is closer to those who are suffering now."

The archbishop-designate "has always been very close to the people," Huberto Ortiz, former executive secretary of the Peruvian bishops' social action commission, told Catholic News Service. "I have always been struck by his close relationship with young people and with the poor."

As a diocesan priest chosen for one of Peru's most visible church leadership positions, Castillo's appointment marks a shift that reflects Francis' vision of the church.

When he was studying sociology at San Marcos National University, he was involved in the National Union of Catholic Students, where he met Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez,

whose theology of the preferential option for the poor strongly influenced the church in Latin America.

Cipriani was highly critical of Gutierrez and removed him from pastoral duties. Gutierrez then joined the Dominicans.

The archbishop-designate also has ministered on what Francis calls "the periphery." He worked in a low-income neighborhood on the southern edge of Lima, where one of his mentors was now-retired Bishop Luis Bambaren, who was known for his defense of the rights of the poor.

The new prelate also has extensive experience working with young people, in university ministry and youth ministry in Lima beginning in the 1990s, as a member of the Peruvian bishops' commission on youth, and as a theology professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

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At a news conference Jan. 25, Bambaren, who will concelebrate Castillo's elevation to archbishop March 2, presented the newly designated prelate with the crozier used by Cardinal Juan Landazuri Ricketts, who headed the archdiocese when Castillo was ordained and who was also known for his defense of human rights.

Among the parishes where the archbishop-designate has worked is San Lazaro, in the low-income district of Rimac, at the edge of downtown Lima, the same area where Gutierrez was pastor of another parish. The March 2 ceremony will begin at San Lazaro and the participants will march in procession to the cathedral, following the footsteps of Lima's second archbishop, St. Toribio of Mogrovejo.

Castillo was born in Lima Feb. 28, 1950. After earning a bachelor's degree in social sciences, he entered the seminary and was sent to Rome to study, earning his philosophy and theology degrees from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Lima in 1984, he continued his studies in Rome, earning a doctorate in theology from the Gregorian in 1987.

For the past 30 years, he has taught theology at the Catholic University of Peru while also assisting at parishes and serving on archdiocesan or national offices for youth

ministry, campus ministry and vocations.

Cipriani, who was ordained a priest of Opus Dei in 1977, had led the Archdiocese of Lima for just over 20 years. St. John Paul II named him a cardinal in 2001.

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