News



Pope Francis named Auxiliary Bishop Robert Brennan of Rockville Centre, New York, to head the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 31. Brennan is pictured in a Sept. 16, 2017 photo. (CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)

by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Washington — January 31, 2019

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Editor's note: This story has been updated throughout.

Pope Francis has appointed Auxiliary Bishop Robert Brennan of Rockville Centre, New York, to be the new bishop of Columbus, Ohio.

The pope also accepted the resignation of Columbus Bishop Frederick Campbell, who had led the diocese since 2004. He is 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation to the pope.

The changes were announced Jan. 31 in Washington by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Brennan's installation is scheduled for March 29 in St. Joseph Cathedral in Columbus.

Ordained a priest of Rockville Centre in 1989, Brennan, 56, had served as its auxiliary bishop since 2012.

He was introduced in Columbus during a mid-morning media conference.

Brennan said he was honored and humbled by "this call to serve the Lord in a new way" as the 12th bishop of Columbus.

He told the Diocese of Columbus in a Jan. 31 statement that his appointment "makes me incredibly happy to take this journey with you ... to serve as your pastor."

"I look forward to ... sharing the 'Joy of the Gospel' and the 'Splendor of Truth,'" he continued. "And if we can laugh and sing and raise our voices in praise of God along the way, then all the better."

He also said he was praying for the church in Columbus and invited people to pray for him as well.

To the Diocese of Rockville Centre, he said he will "always love Long Island and its people."

"I have been blessed to minister to the people of the Diocese of Rockville Centre for 30 years and am thankful for the opportunities that has presented. But the Holy Father has asked me to serve as bishop of Columbus and I look forward to getting to know the Diocese of Columbus and the people there," his statement said.

Bishop John Barres of Rockville Centre congratulated his colleague on his new assignment, saying he has a "blend of holiness, missionary fire, humility, intelligence and pastoral experience" that will help him lead the Columbus Diocese "in an extraordinary way."

Brennan has been "a beloved leader of our diverse Hispanic community on Long Island helping to shepherd the community through the tragic experience of gang violence and constantly advocating for comprehensive immigration reform," Barres said.

Advertisement

In Rockville Centre, Brennan championed Catholic education and "sees the Catholic education experience as a critical component of the new evangelization," Barres added.

Retired Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre added his remarks of congratulation as well to Brennan, who had served as his secretary and as diocesan vicar general as well as "counselor and friend."

"Always humble, always attentive, he is a model priest and a bishop who comes to one and all 'as one who serves,'" Murphy said in a statement. "He is a parish priest whose hear is always with his parishioners, a chaplain who loves to celebrate Mass for young people and, equally, for the incarcerated in our jails."

Bishop Nelson Perez of Cleveland welcomed Brennan to Ohio and said he was "thrilled" by his appointment to a neighboring diocese.

Perez and Brennan were ordained together as auxiliary bishops of Rockville Centre in 2012.

"Bishop Brennan brings to his new diocese vast administrative experience and skill, a wonderful priestly heart and a deep pastoral passion to serve the church tirelessly," Perez said in a statement. "The priests, deacons, religious and faithful of the Diocese of Columbus will very quickly see what a blessing they have in Bishop Brennan."

Born June 7, 1962, in the Bronx, one of New York City's five boroughs, Brennan attended St. John's University in the borough of Queens, where he earned his undergraduate degree in mathematics. He earned his master of divinity degree from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, New York.

He has served at the Church of St. Patrick and as secretary to the late Bishop John McGann, the late Bishop James McHugh and Murphy. He was vicar general and moderator of the curia and pastor of the Church of St. Mary of the Isle. He also has been a member of the board of directors for Catholic Health Services of Long Island, a member of the bishop's advisory Committee for Catholic Education and a chaplain for the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Nassau County.

Campbell was ordained a priest in 1980. He served as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis from 1999 to 2004 and became the 11th bishop of the Diocese of Columbus in 2004.