News



Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, celebrates Mass Jan. 15, 2014, in the Holy Land. Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop Pates and named as his successor Fr. William Joensen, a priest in the Archdiocese of Dubuque. (CNS photo/Debbie Hill)

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, and named as his successor Fr. William M. Joensen, a priest in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa.

The resignation and appointment were announced July 18 in Washington by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Vatican nuncio to the United States.

Bishop-designate Joensen's episcopal ordination and installation will be celebrated Sept. 27.

"Today, our Holy Father Pope Francis gave voice to God's will by naming Father William Joensen as the next bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines; and Father Bill said, 'Yes,'" said Dubuque Archbishop Michael O. Jackels said in a statement.

"We are sad to lose Father Bill as a member of our presbyterate; he will be missed," he added. "Hopefully, the faithful of the Diocese of Des Moines will very soon come to appreciate the gift God is giving them in their new bishop."

Bishop-designate Joensen, who turned 59 July 8, was born in Waterloo, Iowa, and was ordained a priest in the Dubuque Archdiocese in 1989.

He attended seminary at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, and holds a doctorate in philosophy from The Catholic University of America.

Pates, 76, turned 75 in February 2018, and as required by canon law submitted his resignation letter to the pope then, but he continued serving the Des Moines Diocese. He is a former chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace and since leaving that position has taken a leading role in advocacy for the environment.

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI named Pates the ninth bishop of Des Moines. Eight years earlier, he became an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1968 in the Minnesota archdiocese, where he was born Feb. 12, 1943.

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