

Scranton's Bishop Martino stepping down

Tom Roberts | Aug. 28, 2009



Bishop Joseph F. Martino of Scranton, Pa (CNS file photo 2005)

Update from Catholic News Service Aug. 31:

Pope accepts resignation of Scranton bishop for health reasons

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI has accepted the resignation of Bishop Joseph F. Martino, 63, from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Scranton, Pa., for health reasons.

He has appointed Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia to be apostolic administrator for the diocese.

The pope also has accepted the resignation of Scranton Auxiliary Bishop John M. Dougherty, who is 77. Canon law requires that all bishops submit their resignation to the pope when they turn 75.

See an update here: [Scranton's Martino resigns, citing insomnia, fatigue](#) [1]

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NCR News Story posted Aug. 28:

Bishop Joseph F. Martino will resign as head of the Diocese of Scranton, Pa., as early as next week, according to sources within the diocese, it was reported today by several outlets in the Scranton area.

The *Towanda Daily Review* and TV station WNEP each reported the impending shift and that Cardinal Justin Rigali of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the metropolitan see in Pennsylvania, will oversee the diocese until Martino's replacement is named.

Attempts to reach a diocesan spokesman this morning were unsuccessful.

The *Times Leader* newspaper in Scranton reported yesterday that Martino was moving out of the traditional

downtown residence for Scranton bishops at the rectory of St. Peter's Cathedral to a rural retreat center that once served as a diocesan seminary.

The 63-year-old Martino's six-year-tenure has been distinctive for an almost non-stop round of battles with Catholic academics, Catholic teachers' union, Catholic politicians and a range of other groups, including his own peers among the Catholic hierarchy.

Martino, highly regarded by the Catholic right for his rigid anti-abortion stance and repeated condemnations of President Obama and other pro-choice politicians, once famously arrived unannounced at a discussion in a parish of a document on political responsibility that had been passed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and declared: "No USCCB document is relevant in this diocese. The USCCB doesn't speak for me." He told the assembled crowd that "The only relevant document" is my letter," referring to a letter on politics he had mandated be read at all masses on a given Sunday. "There is one teacher in this diocese, and these points are not debatable."

He has urged priests and Eucharistic ministers to deny communion to politicians whose views on the abortion issue differed from those of the bishop. He placed an official notice in the diocesan newspaper informing Eucharistic ministers that they had a duty to refuse communion to anyone whose "unworthiness" to receive was publicly known. The notice emphasized Catholic politicians.

He threatened to bar U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, a long-time anti-abortion Democrat, from communion for voting to approve former Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as federal Health and Human Services secretary.

He has battled with officials at Misericordia University, a Catholic college in the diocese, for hosting author Keith Boykin, a gay rights advocate, and sought to close down the institution's program on diversity.

In February, Martino sent a letter to the leaders of three Irish-American organizations threatening to close the cathedral during St. Patrick's Day celebrations if he groups "honor pro-abortion officials" by inviting them to speak or otherwise be honored during events in which the church might be involved.

Ultimately the mass was held, but not before he again threatened to shut down the mass if members of the local Catholic teachers' union were invited to march in the St. Patrick's Day parade. Martino has refused to recognize the union.

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