

Pope names Dallas auxiliary bishop to head El Paso diocese

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Pope Francis has named Auxiliary Bishop Mark Seitz of Dallas as bishop of El Paso, Texas.

The appointment was announced Monday in Washington by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Seitz, 59, succeeds Bishop Armando Ochoa, who was named bishop of Fresno, Calif., in December 2011.

Seitz was born in Milwaukee in 1954. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy and master's degrees in theology and divinity from the University of Dallas.

He was ordained a priest for the Dallas diocese in 1980.

He earned a master in liturgical studies degree from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., in 1985. In 2004, he was named a monsignor.

After his ordination, he was pastor at several parishes in the Dallas diocese. He was also adjunct professor at the University of Dallas and spiritual director at Holy Trinity Seminary.

He was named auxiliary bishop of Dallas on March 11, 2010.

The El Paso diocese has a population of 686,037 Catholics.

Seitz expressed thanks to Pope Francis for "calling me to serve this special diocese (of El Paso) especially at the time it marks its centennial" as he was introduced to clergy and diocesan staff and members of the local press corps Monday.

At a gathering in Martyrs of America Hall at the diocese's St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Seitz said, "I know the Lord will supply my defects and God will use me as his instrument" in serving the people of diverse cultures in his new diocese.

The new head of a diocese that had been without a bishop for 16 months said it is his "intention and desire to serve the entire community with a preferential love for the poor."

"I will do my best by living simply," he said.

He made a special point of expressing hope that he could "help bring consolation to anyone who has suffered sexual abuse."

He thanked Ochoa, who had continued as apostolic administrator of the diocese, for his warm welcome and assistance, saying Ochoa's leadership is a "model I can build on."

Seitz said he looked forward to meeting with priests and diocesan staff and visiting the parishes in the 26,686-square-mile diocese at the western tip of Texas.

In response to questions from the local press corps, he said he would be working hard to encourage more vocations to the priesthood in the diocese and that he hoped to lead the faithful in being examples of a Christ-centered life in order to encourage the return to the church of those who have fallen away in recent years.

He told a student at the diocese's Cathedral High School that he was looking to youth of the diocese as a great resource of vigor and enthusiasm "to lead the way in showing us how to live in unity and love."

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