

Archbishop Gregory named bishops' moderator for Jewish affairs

WASHINGTON - Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta has been named to succeed Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York as moderator of Jewish affairs for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, effective Dec. 12.

Archbishop Dolan resigned the post, which he had held since October 2009, after his Nov. 16 election as USCCB president. Bishops elected to the post of president ordinarily resign from all conference chairmanships and committees.

In announcing the appointment, Archbishop Dolan said Archbishop Gregory "has reached out to members of the Jewish community from the moment he was elected chairman" of the USCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in 2008.

"He listens attentively to the concerns of others, is sensitive to building constructive relationships and has already begun to attend our meetings of the Jewish-Catholic dialogues," he added.

Jewish dialogue partners praised the appointment, with Rabbi Gil Rosenthal of the National Council of Synagogues calling Archbishop Gregory "warm, caring, compassionate and intelligent."

"And above all, Archbishop Gregory is committed to the goal of building bridges of trust and friendship between Jews and Catholics," he added. "We enthusiastically welcome his appointment."

Rabbi Alvin Berkun, president of the Rabbinical Assembly, said Archbishop Gregory already has been an active participant in Catholic-Jewish dialogue and brings "the benefit of his experience and wisdom" as USCCB president from 2001 to 2004.

Until 2009, the role of Jewish moderator had been held for more than two decades by Cardinal William H. Keeler, the now-retired archbishop of Baltimore.

“The relationships between the Catholic bishops of our nation and the Jewish community have made huge strides over the past 50 years,” said Archbishop Gregory in a statement. “Owing to Cardinal Keeler and the late Cardinal John O’Connor of New York, we have in place a deep trust and friendship that allows us to face problems together in a manner that would have been impossible prior to the reconciliation brought about by Vatican II and Pope John Paul II.”

In addition to chairing the USCCB ecumenical and interreligious committee, Archbishop Gregory is a member of the standing consultation between the National Council of Synagogues and the USCCB and serves as the “Catholic president” of Christian Churches Together, an association of Catholic, mainline Protestant, Orthodox, evangelical and African-American churches for common witness on poverty, racism and other issues.

A bishop since 1983, he was named to his present post in Atlanta in 2005.