

Bishops named for Duluth, Pueblo; Providence to get auxiliary bishop

WASHINGTON – Pope Benedict XVI has named new bishops for the Diocese of Duluth, Minn., and the Diocese of Pueblo, Colo., and has appointed an auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Providence, R.I.

He also accepted the resignation of Pueblo Bishop Arthur N. Tafoya, 76.

The pope appointed Father Paul Sirba, a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, to head the Duluth Diocese. He named Father Fernando Isern, a priest of the Miami Archdiocese, to succeed Bishop Tafoya as bishop of Pueblo.

Pope Benedict also named Monsignor Robert C. Evans, a Providence diocesan priest, to be auxiliary bishop of the diocese.

The changes were announced in Washington Oct. 15 by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop-designate Sirba, 49, is vicar general and moderator of the curia of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Archdiocese. He is also spiritual director at St. Paul Seminary.

Born in St. Paul in 1960, he was ordained a priest in 1986 and had a number of parish assignments, including pastor at Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Parish in St. Paul, 2000-06.

He has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, a master of divinity degree from St. Paul Seminary, and an advanced apostolic diploma and a master's degree from Notre Dame Institute of Catechetics in Alexandria, Va.

Bishop-designate Sirba succeeds Bishop Dennis M. Schnurr, who was named coadjutor archbishop of Cincinnati in October 2008. In the interim the Duluth Diocese has been administered by Father James Bissonette.

The Duluth Diocese covers 22,354 square miles. The total population of the area is

estimated at 439,172; about 15 percent, or 66,000, are Catholics.

Bishop-designate Isern was born Sept. 22, 1958, in Havana. He was ordained a priest for the Miami Archdiocese in 1993. He has a bachelor's degree from Florida International University, Miami. He attended St. John Vianney College Seminary there and St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Fla.

Since his ordination he has had several parish assignments. Since 2003 he has been pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Miami.

In Pueblo he succeeds Bishop Tafoya, who has headed the diocese since 1980. Bishop Tafoya was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, N.M., in 1962.

On the national level, Bishop Tafoya has served on several bishops' committees, including the Administrative Committee and what is now called the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. He has been a member of the National Advisory Council and been on the board of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

The Pueblo Diocese covers 48,155 square miles. The total population of the area is estimated at 621,000; Catholics number 96,904, or 16 percent.

Bishop-designate Evans was born Sept. 2, 1947, in Moultrie, Ga., and ordained a priest for the Providence Diocese in 1973 in Rome.

He has had several assignments as assistant pastor and for the last two years has been pastor of St. Philip Church in Greenville, R.I.

But he has held a number of posts in the diocese: secretary to the bishop and vice chancellor, 1983-87; vice chancellor and tribunal judge, 1989-91; and chancellor and director of the Office for Priests' Personnel, 1991-2001.

From 2001 to 2005 he was director of the Institute for Continuing Theological Education at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. Following that he was secretary at the apostolic nunciature in Washington until 2007.

He attended Seminary High School and Seminary College of Our Lady of Providence

in Warwick, R.I. He continued his education in Rome and holds a bachelor's degree in sacred theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, a master's degree in theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas and a licentiate in canon law from the Gregorian.

The Providence Diocese covers 1,085 square miles. The total population of the diocese is estimated at about 1 million people, with 624,120 of them, or 59 percent, Catholic.