

# **In major appointments, Cardinal Ouellet to head bishops' congregation**

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI has appointed new heads of several Vatican departments, naming Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Quebec as prefect of the Congregation for Bishops.

Cardinal Ouellet, 66, will head the office that helps the pope choose bishops for Latin-rite dioceses around the world. It's the first time a North American cardinal has been placed in charge of the powerful congregation.

The pope also named Italian Archbishop Rino Fisichella as president of a newly created agency, the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. He named Spanish Monsignor Ignacio Carrasco de Paula, a member of Opus Dei, to replace Archbishop Fisichella as president of the Pontifical Academy for Life. The appointments were announced June 30.

Vatican officials said that on July 1, the pope would formally name Swiss Bishop Kurt Koch as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, replacing German Cardinal Walter Kasper, who had headed the council since 2001.

Cardinal Ouellet, who succeeds 76-year-old Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, is not a stranger to Rome or to the Roman Curia. He studied in Rome and returned to the city to teach in 1996. A year later, he was appointed chair of dogmatic theology at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family.

In 2001, he was named a bishop and appointed secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and also served on the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

In 2002, Pope John Paul II named him archbishop of Quebec, and in 2003 he made him a cardinal. He serves on the Vatican congregations overseeing liturgy, clergy and Catholic education, and is also a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

He has been a member of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, which he will now serve as president; the commission was established in 1958 to study issues impacting Catholics in the region and to serve as a channel of communication between the Vatican and the Latin American bishops' council.

Bishop Koch, who will take over the reins at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, is a past president of the Swiss bishops' conference, a former professor of dogmatic theology and liturgy and has served as a member of the Christian unity council since 2002. He has also been a member of the international Catholic-Orthodox theological commission and a member of the international Catholic-Lutheran dialogue commission.

In a letter June 30 to Catholics in Basel, Bishop Koch said the pope asked him in February if he would take the job. He said the pope stressed that he wanted someone who had both theological knowledge and practical experience in living and working alongside Protestant communities.

The pope's words, he said, demonstrate that improved relations with the Orthodox are not his only concern, but that the pope sees the unity of all Christians as the will of Jesus.

Born March 15, 1950, in Emmebrucke, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Basel in 1982. He studied at Lucerne University and at the University of Munich. After three years of service in a parish in Bern, he began teaching at Lucerne, eventually becoming rector of the theological faculty in 1995.

Following special traditional procedures, he was elected bishop of Basel by the priests of the cathedral chapter in August 1995, and Pope John Paul II confirmed the election four months later.

Bishop Koch replaces Cardinal Kasper, 77, who has been at the council for 11 years – first as secretary, then as president since 2001.

Meeting reporters June 25, Cardinal Kasper said that a challenge he faced repeatedly was clarifying the church's position when the wording of certain

documents – from the Vatican as well as from Orthodox and Protestant churches – offended the other partner in ecumenical dialogue.

Particularly with the Anglicans and Protestants, he said, since the year 2000 there has been a noticeable loss of “the great enthusiasm” for the possibility of Christian unity that marked the years immediately after the Second Vatican Council.

“Errors, or better, imprudence in formulating the truth have been committed by both sides, including our own,” he said.

Still, the cardinal said, the high-level ecumenical representation at the funeral of Pope John Paul and at the installation of Pope Benedict in 2005 “was a miracle,” that showed just how solid ecumenical relationships were even if the goal of full unity still appears far off.

Archbishop Fisichella, 58, will head the first major Roman Curia department created by Pope Benedict. The pope announced the formation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization June 27, saying it would help find ways to “to re-propose the perennial truth of the Gospel” in regions where secularism is smothering church practice.

Details about the council and its tasks were to be announced in early July, Vatican sources said.

Archbishop Fisichella served as an auxiliary bishop of Rome from 1998 to 2008. He taught theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, where he was named rector in 2002, a position he continued to hold until his latest appointment. He is a member of Vatican congregations dealing with doctrine and saints’ causes.

Since 2008, Archbishop Fisichella has headed the Pontifical Academy for Life. He came under fire in recent months from a small number of academy members, who said in a statement that he should be replaced because he “does not understand what absolute respect for innocent human lives entails.”

The criticism of Archbishop Fisichella stemmed from an article he wrote in 2009, which said a Brazilian archbishop’s response to an abortion performed on a 9-year-old girl had shown a lack of pastoral care and compassion. The Vatican later issued a

clarification reiterating its teaching against abortion and saying the Brazilian archbishop had, in fact, acted with “pastoral delicacy” in the matter.

Monsignor Carrasco de Paula, Archbishop Fisichella’s replacement as president of the academy, has served as the academy’s chancellor since 2004. He has degrees in medicine as well as philosophy, and has published numerous articles on questions of medical ethics and medical law.

The Vatican also announced that the pope was naming Archbishop Celestino Migliore as the new papal nuncio to Poland. Archbishop Migliore had been the Vatican representative to the United Nations in New York since 2002, delivering numerous speeches on international topics and helping to arrange Pope Benedict’s visit to the United Nations General Assembly in 2008.