

Knoxville bishop named to succeed Archbishop Kelly in Louisville

WASHINGTON – Pope Benedict XVI has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly of Louisville, Ky., and named Bishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Knoxville, Tenn., to succeed him.

The changes were announced June 12 by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Archbishop Kelly, a Dominican who turns 76 on July 14, has been a bishop since 1977 and head of the Louisville Archdiocese since 1982.

Archbishop Kurtz, a 60-year-old priest of the Diocese of Allentown, Pa., was named bishop of Knoxville Oct. 26, 1999.

In a statement posted on the Archdiocese of Louisville's Web site, Archbishop Kurtz said he hoped to demonstrate "the same pastoral charity and affection to the people of Louisville as (Archbishop Kelly) has shown, always respecting the dignity of each of the faithful."

He was to be installed as archbishop of Louisville on Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption and the 30th anniversary of Archbishop Kelly's episcopal ordination.

Archbishop Kelly said he could not "imagine a better match for the Archdiocese of Louisville" and said Archbishop Kurtz's expertise in advocacy work for the poor and his leadership of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life since 2005 would serve the archdiocese well.

Born Aug. 18, 1946, in Mahanoy City, Pa., Archbishop Kurtz holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and master's degrees in divinity and social work. He was ordained a priest March 18, 1972.

In the Allentown Diocese, he held a variety of parish and administrative posts, including executive director of the diocesan Catholic Social Agency and Family Life Bureau, 1984-94; moderator of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference's department

of social welfare, 1983-91; diocesan coordinator for health affairs, 1994-98; and diocesan director of Catholic Charities, 1988-98.

He was serving as pastor of Notre Dame of Bethlehem Church in Bethlehem, Pa., when Pope John Paul II named him bishop of Knoxville Oct. 26, 1999.

Archbishop Kurtz has been an active member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, currently serving on four different USCCB committees, as well as on the boards of Catholic Relief Services and the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

A member of the Committee on Marriage and Family Life since 2002, he was chosen as chairman-elect in November 2004 and took over as chairman the following year. He is slated to continue in that post until November 2008.

His other current assignments are to the USCCB committees on Pro-Life Activities and on Budget and Finance, and the Administrative Committee. He served from 2003 to 2005 as a member of the Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry.

Archbishop Kurtz, an honorary member of the Catholic Social Workers National Association, became the group's episcopal adviser earlier this year.

In Knoxville he has headed a now 19-year-old diocese whose 50,000 Catholics make up about 2 percent of the population. The Archdiocese of Louisville, which in 2008 marks the 200th anniversary of its establishment as the Diocese of Bardstown, has a Catholic population of nearly 200,000 in a total population of about 1.2 million.

Born July 14, 1931, in Rochester, N.Y., Thomas Cajetan Kelly joined the Dominicans in 1951 and was ordained a priest June 5, 1958. He earned a licentiate in theology from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington and a doctorate in canon law from the University of St. Thomas in Rome; he also did graduate work at the University of Vienna in Austria and Cambridge University in England.

From 1962 to 1965 he was secretary in the office of the provincial of the Dominicans' New York province. He also worked with the Legion of Decency and the Archdiocese of New York's tribunal.

He joined the staff of what was then the apostolic delegation in Washington in 1965 and served there as secretary and archivist until he became associate general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, predecessors of the USCCB, on June 1, 1971.

Elected general secretary of the bishops' conferences in 1977, he also was named an auxiliary bishop of Washington that same year by Pope Paul VI and was ordained to the episcopacy Aug. 15, 1977. Although many general secretaries have become bishops after leaving the conference, he was the last to be an auxiliary bishop and general secretary at the same time.

Pope John Paul named him archbishop of Louisville Dec. 29, 1981, and he was installed Feb. 18, 1982.

As head of the Louisville Archdiocese, Archbishop Kelly initiated a systematic approach to planning, resulting in the first long-range strategic plan in 1989. He also launched a major project to restore the Cathedral of the Assumption, which has become a public sanctuary and a center for the arts and for service to those in need. In 1996 he spearheaded the Endowment for Excellence, a campaign for Catholic education, which exceeded its \$15 million goal by more than \$5 million.

Among the national and regional posts held by Archbishop Kelly were: chairman of the board of directors of the National Catholic Educational Association; member of the board of trustees of the Catholic Health Association; and episcopal liaison for the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. Currently he serves as chancellor and trustee of Bellarmine College in Louisville; chairman of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky; and member of the International Dominican Foundation executive committee.