

Pope Francis appoints Archbishop Lori as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Following his acceptance of the letter of resignation of Bishop Michael J. Bransfield, Pope Francis appointed Archbishop William E. Lori apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, while remaining Archbishop of Baltimore. Archbishop Lori will serve as apostolic administrator until the appointment and installation of a new bishop.

The resignation and appointment were publicized in Washington, Sept. 13 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

The pope further instructed Archbishop Lori to conduct an investigation into allegations against Bishop Bransfield of sexual harassment of adults, according to a **news release** from the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“My primary concern is for the care and support of the priests and people of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston at this difficult time,” Archbishop Lori said in the news release. “I further pledge to conduct a thorough investigation in search of the truth into the troubling allegations against Bishop Bransfield and to work closely with the clergy, religious and lay leaders of the diocese until the appointment of a new bishop.”

Archbishop Lori, who was instructed by the Holy See to announce the forthcoming investigation, will meet with clergy and lay leaders of the diocese Sept. 13 and 14. Archbishop Lori will celebrate Mass in Wheeling Sept. 15, 6 p.m., at the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

A hotline has been established for those wishing to share any information related to this investigation. The hotline number is 1-833-272-4225.

The Diocese of Wheeling is comprised of 24,282 square miles in the state of West Virginia and has a total population of 1,844,128 of which 77,874 or 4 percent, are

Catholic. The diocese is a suffragan diocese in the Metropolitan See of Baltimore.

Michael J. Bransfield was born Sept. 8, 1943, in Philadelphia and was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia May 15, 1971.

From 1971 to 1973, then-Father Bransfield served as assistant pastor of St. Albert the Great Parish in Huntingdon Valley, Pa. Beginning in 1973, he served as a teacher, chaplain and chairman of the Religion Department at Lansdale Catholic High School in Lansdale, Pa.

From 1980 through the 1990s, Bishop Bransfield held a number of positions at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. In October 1986, he was appointed the 10th director of the National Shrine, and when the National Shrine was designated a basilica in 1990, he was named the first rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Bishop Bransfield was ordained and installed Feb.22, 2005, as the eighth bishop of Wheeling-Charleston at the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

Bishop Bransfield turned 75 Sept. 8. Diocesan bishops are required by canon law to submit their resignation upon reaching the age of 75.