

Pope transfers Moscow archbishop to Belarus

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI named Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of Moscow to head the Archdiocese of Minsk-Mohilev in Belarus.

The Sept. 21 appointment fills a see left vacant by the 2006 retirement of Cardinal Kazimierz Swiatek.

The same day, Pope Benedict appointed an Italian missionary working in St. Petersburg, Russia, Father Paolo Pezzi, as the new head of the Moscow-based Archdiocese of the Mother of God.

Archbishop Kondrusiewicz, who was born in Belarus, told Vatican Radio Sept. 21, “I go to Minsk with great joy.”

“I am leaving Moscow because this is God’s will – the Holy Father’s will,” said the 61-year-old archbishop. “I must work where (God) points me to go.”

Archbishop Kondrusiewicz was responsible for the pastoral care of Belarusian Catholics when he served as apostolic administrator of Minsk, 1989-1991.

Pope John Paul II made him the first resident archbishop of Moscow when he restored the Apostolic Administration of Moscow in 1991. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz became head of the Moscow Archdiocese when Pope John Paul upgraded Russia’s four apostolic administrations in 2002.

The archbishop told Vatican Radio he will be leaving “a piece of my heart” back in Moscow, where he rebuilt the church “from scratch.”

He said he had to rebuild and institute commissions, “acquire the cathedral, (rebuild) the curia, establish the theological institute, then the seminary” among other things.

He said he hoped to help further relations with the Orthodox Church and all the people in Minsk.

In Rome, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told journalists Sept. 21 that Archbishop Kondrusiewicz probably would ordain Archbishop-designate Pezzi.

The archbishop-designate, 47, is rector of the major seminary of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, in St. Petersburg, and is a member of the Fraternity of the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo, a priestly association within Communion and Liberation.

Archbishop-designate Pezzi served as head of a Catholic newspaper and deacon in Siberia from 1993 to 1998 and has been head of Communion and Liberation in Russia since 1998. He is fluent in Russian, English, Italian, Spanish and French.