

Leading Asian theologian is next Manila archbishop

POPE Benedict XVI on Thursday appointed leading Asian theologian Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle of Imus, Archbishop of Manila.

Fifty-four year-old Bishop Tagle succeeds Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, 79, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) announced citing a letter from the Apostolic Nunciature in Manila.

"I write to inform you that the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has appointed His Excellency Most Reverend Luis Antonio Tagle, until now Bishop of Imus, as Archbishop of Manila," the announcement quoted the letter signed by Monsignor Gabor Pinter, Nunciature Charge D' Affaires.

The appointment was reportedly announced at noon in Rome on Oct. 13, 6:00 p.m. same day in Manila.

At the time of the appointment, Bishop Tagle, was serving as chairman of CBCP's Commission on Doctrine of the Faith and Chairman of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences.

Bishop Tagle was also serving as member of the International Theological Commission of the Vatican, a body of expert advisers on Church teaching.

His intervention at the Oct. 2008 Synod of Bishops in which he advocated for greater listening by Church leaders placed him on front pages and shows of Rome media.

Cardinal Rosales, who turned 79 last August, had announced he would retire this year and was just waiting for his successor to be named.

The cardinal, who served as Manila's archbishop for seven years, submitted his resignation in 2007 when he turned 75, the mandatory retirement age for prelates, but the pope had extended his term indefinitely.

Asked of his greatest achievement, Cardinal Rosales cited his encounters with different people, particularly the poor.

"I think it's having been given the opportunity to get to know the poor more, the good hearted people, the generous people who continuously help the Church. I thank all of them," he said.

He leaves Manila's more than 2.70 million Catholics in the pastoral care of Bishop Tagle. His successor takes over a historically significant post that requires him to engage the national leadership in ways local Churches have not had to do.

Born in Manila on June 21, 1957, Bishop Tagle of Filipino-Chinese descent went to the Jesuit Ateneo De Manila University's San Jose Major Seminary for diocesan priests. He was ordained a priest on February 27, 1982 at the age of 25.

In 1992, he completed his doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. Six years later he was appointed as expert at the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia in Rome.

Months before becoming a bishop in 2001, he was assigned by the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, to participate in a series of video conferences about ongoing formation of priests.

Bishop Tagle, ordained bishop for Imus on Dec. 12, 2001, has also been a busy television preacher, international speaker and author.
