

Indianapolis archdiocese introduces Arch. William Tobin as new leader



Archbishop Joseph Tobin was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to lead the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He was officially introduced Thursday morning.

Tobin is replacing Archbishop Emeritus Daniel Buechlein, who retired last year because of health problems.

"We're here today to welcome our new archbishop," said Greg Otolski, director of communications with the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, at Thursday's announcement. "We've been waiting a year for this, so we're happy the announcement's been made in Rome this morning."

The new archbishop said he is humbled to be missioned at a place where the Catholic church outdates the country.

"I was quite surprised three weeks ago when I was told the Father wished me to serve in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. I imagine you might have been surprised too," said Tobin.

For the last two years, the 60-year-old Tobin worked in the Vatican at the time it had initiated investigations of nuns in the United States. Questioned by Eyewitness News, he outlined the role he would like to see women play in the church.

"Women would like to ensure the church recognize their gifts and incorporate them in all manners possible," Tobin said.

He was seen as a man willing to listen to the anger and hurt that so many sisters felt as a result of the investigation. Sister Mary Vincent, in attendance at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, expressed hope.

"I would wish he would get us together. Everything in unity. If we could be united in any force we can do a lot for the country and the church," she said.

Tobin said after his introduction at Saints Peter & Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis that it wasn't easy to leave his post in Rome and that he didn't seek to leave.

Father Jim Farrell says the 13-month wait for a shepherd has brought peace.

"Archbishop Tobin's presence is very peaceful and I have a feeling that he has a way of disarming a situation and bringing about a peaceful resolution," said Fr. Farrell.

Archbishop Emeritus Daniel Buechlein also attended the announcement. He has dealt with health problems in recent years including Hodgkin's lymphoma, and appeared at the event in a wheelchair. He waved to the group, who gave him a standing ovation.

Auxiliary Bishop Christopher Coyne has been acting as apostolic administrator since Fr. Buechlein retired last year. The 39-county archdiocese has 225,000 members in about 150 churches across the southern half of Indiana.

"It's so nice to see our archbishop emeritus here looking like a good monk. He said he was gonna go back to the monastery and spend time with his community. It's wonderful for him to be here," said Fr. Coyne.

Coyne said that during his time as administrator, he's learned that "Indianapolis has a thriving and healthy Catholic community which serves not only the people who share our Catholic faith but so many of the people who live in southern and central Indiana."

He said that was due to Buechlein's work over the past 19 years, and that Tobin will be able to build on that foundation.

The oldest of eight children, Archbishop Tobin said he was familiar with Indiana in one way.

"I am happy to serve in the state of Indiana which has such an enlightened policy in allowing parents to choose the best way they think they have for educating their children. Even in Rome, there was news of the voucher system," he said.

At the end of the announcement the archbishop displayed a Colts scarf that was given him by Archbishop Emeritus Daniel Buechlein. With that, in a move meant to display respect, he walked over to his wheelchair. It also was a visual reminder that the transition was now complete.

Archbishop Tobin will be installed on December 3rd, the feast day of St Francis Xavier at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral downtown Indianapolis.

Tobin's background:

Pope Benedict XVI had tapped Tobin, a Redemptorist priest, to be the No. 2 official in the Vatican's office for religious orders in 2010. At the time, the Vatican had initiated two separate investigations of U.S. nuns, looking into both their quality of life and their doctrinal orthodoxy.

The investigations were initiated following years of complaints from theological conservatives that American nuns had grown too secular and political while abandoning traditional faith. In press interviews, Tobin had acknowledged the hurt many nuns felt over the Vatican's crackdown and called for a strategy of reconciliation.

Archbishop Daniel Buechlein retired 13 months ago with health problems.

Four of Indiana's five Roman Catholic dioceses have seen leadership changes in the past three years after no turnover since the early 1990s:

- Indianapolis Archdiocese: Archbishop Joseph Tobin named Thursday to replace Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, who stepped down in September 2011 because of health problems from position he held since 1992.
- Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese: Bishop Kevin Rhoades installed in January 2010 to replace Bishop John D'Arcy after 24 years.
- Lafayette Diocese: Bishop Timothy Doherty took over in July 2010, succeeding Bishop William Higi, who retired after 26 years.
- Evansville Diocese: Bishop Charles Thompson ordained in June 2011 to replace Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger after 22 years.
- Gary Diocese: Bishop Dale Melczek turns 74 next month and has led the diocese since 1992. The church's normal retirement age for bishops is 75.

Kevin Rader