

**Issue Date:** Friday, Sept. 21, 2012

## Holy See accepts resignation of Rochester Bishop Matthew Clark; Syracuse Bishop Robert J. Cunningham named Apostolic Administrator

ROCHESTER, New York – Pope Benedict XVI has accepted the resignation of Bishop of Rochester Matthew H. Clark. Bishop of Syracuse Robert J. Cunningham has been appointed as Apostolic Administrator of the Rochester Diocese until a new bishop is named at a later date.

The appointment is effective Friday, Sept. 21, 2012. Bishop Cunningham will oversee all aspects of the 12-county Diocese of Rochester, as well as continuing to lead the Diocese of Syracuse. Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Hart, who served as vicar general and moderator of the Pastoral Center under Bishop Clark, will be Bishop Cunningham's delegate in the daily governance of the Diocese of Rochester.

Bishop Clark submitted his resignation on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 15, 2012, as is required of all diocesan bishops by church law. As the 8<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Clark served from June 1979 until today, second only in length of tenure to Rochester's first bishop, Most Rev. Bernard J. McQuaid.

Bishop Cunningham, a native of Buffalo who was ordained a priest in 1969, served as the 13th Bishop of Ogdensburg from 2004 until his appointment as the 10<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Syracuse in April 2009.

"I am greatly honored, and humbled, to serve as Apostolic Administrator of this diocese," said Bishop Cunningham. "I ask for the prayers of all that I might serve you well, as long as need be. I will be traveling weekly between the Dioceses of Syracuse and Rochester, and hope to make acquaintance with many new friends.

"Above all, I want to help wherever I can, to be the solid bridge that spans the time between Bishop Clark and whomever the 9th Bishop of Rochester may be. I do not know when that will happen, but I do know I am at this Diocese's service as long as it takes.

Bishop Clark said, “I assure the good and faithful people in our 12 counties that the governance of this Diocese is in excellent hands. Now that provision has been made for the pastoral care of our diocese, I am peaceful; and I look forward with lively curiosity to a new phase of my life and ministry after more than 33 years as Bishop of Rochester. I humbly thank God for having lived during this incredible time and for the opportunity to shepherd a beautiful, faithful and inspired people. Words cannot express my gratitude to the people of this Diocese, whom I love very much.”

The Apostolic Nuncio, the Pope’s representative and ambassador in the United States, and the Holy See’s Congregation for Bishops are responsible for identifying possible candidates to be the new Bishop of Rochester. They present their thoughts directly to the Holy Father, who makes the final determination and appointment. The process can take several months.

More than 300,000 Roman Catholics reside in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, which was established in March 1868. The counties contained within the Diocese are: Monroe, Livingston, Wayne, Ontario, Seneca, Cayuga, Yates, Tompkins, Schuyler, Tioga, Chemung and Steuben.

##