



Department of Communication

Archdiocese of San Antonio

**For Immediate Release
January 3, 2008**

***Pope Benedict XVI appoints San Antonio Auxiliary Bishop Patrick J. Zurek
new Bishop of Diocese of Amarillo.***

The Holy See announced at 6 a.m. San Antonio time today, that the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has officially accepted the retirement of the Most Reverend John W. Yanta, Bishop of Amarillo, and has appointed The Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek, STL, as his successor. Bishop Zurek has served as Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of San Antonio since his ordination as bishop by Archbishop Patrick F. Flores on February 16, 1998. He will be installed as the ordinary for the Amarillo Diocese on February 22, 2008.

San Antonio media will have their first opportunity to visit with Bishop Zurek concerning his new appointment by the Pope at a press conference on Friday, January 4th at 3 p.m. at the Archdiocesan Pastoral center, (The Chancery). Archbishop José Gomez will also be available for comment at that time.

Zurek received word of the Pope's decision from Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Nuncio to the United States. Describing the phone call Bishop Zurek said, "Within a twinkle of an eye, he gave the message from Pope Benedict, he congratulated me and that was it! I was a little shocked at the suddenness of the announcement, my acceptance and how life would change quickly. I was very happy that he had the confidence in me to appoint me a diocesan bishop. I started to realize that a new chapter in my life was about to unfold. It was exciting!"

Archbishop José H. Gomez said he received the news of the appointment with mixed emotions, "Bishop Zurek has been a blessing in many ways to me personally and to all the people of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. All who have worked alongside him will miss a good friend and a talented and dedicated bishop. However, I am happy that the Diocese of Amarillo will now benefit from his inspired leadership and dedication."

Zurek will become the diocese's eighth ordinary. Bishop Yanta served as Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio from 1994 to 1997, when he was appointed bishop of Amarillo by Pope John Paul II in January of 1997. Bishop Yanta praised the Holy Father's choice in his statement to the people of his diocese, "Bishop Zurek has great experience in evangelizing, shepherding, teaching, sanctifying and serving the People of God...He has earned through experience a reputation for his respected, ecclesial and pastoral relationship with all."

Bishop Zurek is a friend and trusted colleague of the many leaders of the archdiocesan faith community. Acknowledging his work in this area, Archbishop Gomez said, "His spirit of respect and good will did much to encourage solidarity in our joint efforts with the interfaith community as we worked for the common good on a variety of issues in the archdiocese."

Throughout his decade of ministry in San Antonio, Bishop Zurek served as Vicar General, Vicar for the Western Vicariate of the Archdiocese, Archbishop's liaison and Co-coordinator of the Office of the



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Synod, and the Archbishop's Liaison for the Partnership with the Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. He also served as a member of the board of directors of Assumption Seminary, Catholic Television of San Antonio and ACTS Missions. Then-Mayor Ed Garza appointed Bishop Zurek to serve on his Committee on Integrity and Trust in Local Government for the city of San Antonio.

Reflecting on the past ten years Bishop Zurek noted, "From the moment that I was introduced as one of the auxiliary bishops I was welcomed very warmly by the priest, deacons, religious and the faithful. I truly enjoyed moving around the archdiocese, preaching, teaching, introducing new programs, implementing the Archdiocesan Synod, celebrating people's joyful moments and being with them in their sorrows. It was a very fulfilling time!"

Bishop Zurek has been instrumental in assisting Archbishops Flores and Gomez in establishing archdiocesan policies and procedures that meet the requirements of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Archbishop Gomez, commenting on his work in this area, said, "Bishop Zurek's compassion and dedication helped the archdiocese to implement the *Charter* in a true spirit of reconciliation. His supervision of the Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment guided them in their efforts to make every Catholic parish, school and place of ministry a safe harbor for our children."

Bishop Zurek continues to hold several important offices on the national, international and regional level. He serves on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Planning Committee to develop New Spanish Bible. He also remains a member of the Border Bishops Committee organized to discuss pastoral initiatives and immigration issues; and is the president and CEO of the Czech American Priests Association.

Born in Sealy in 1948 to Arnold and Victoria Zurek, Bishop Zurek was the youngest of three children. He received his Bachelor's of Science in Mathematics from the University of St. Thomas, Houston and graduating Magna Cum Laude. He attended St. Mary's Seminary in Houston, and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He also received his STB (Bachelor of Sacred Theology Cum Laude from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (The Angelicum), in Rome. He also received his STL (License in Sacred Theology) in the field of Moral Theology from the Alfonsianum, in Rome. He graduated Magna Cum Laude.

As Bishop Zurek prepares for his new challenges and responsibilities, he expressed his enthusiasm and excitement for his new assignment, and his gratitude, "As I prepare to leave, I certainly want to thank Archbishop Patrick Flores for all the kindnesses he has shown to me. I also thank his for his example of loving service to God's people...people of faith and those without. I also wish to thank Archbishop José Gomez for his example of ministry in shepherding the people. Finally, I would like to thank the priests, deacons and religious who have been so supporting of me during my stay here. Thanks to all who have shown kindness and love to me."

It's not known at this time when Bishop Zurek's successor will be announced by the Holy See.

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