

Roman Catholic Bishop of Oakland
Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron
Appointed Archbishop of Detroit

OAKLAND, Calif., January 5, 2009 – In a formal announcement posted today on the Vatican web site [http://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/bollettino.php?lang=en] and announced at a press conference held this morning in Detroit [www.aod.org], Pope Benedict XVI has appointed the Third Bishop of Oakland Allen H. Vigneron as the new Archbishop of Detroit.

“I want to express my respect and love for the Church in Oakland,” Bishop Vigneron said. “Even though I experience great peace in accepting the call to Detroit because I know it is God’s will, this peace comes with great sadness at parting,” Bishop Vigneron said. “My years of pastoral service in the Diocese of Oakland, while not without significant challenges, have been filled with blessings I will never forget.”

Bishop Vigneron will continue to administer the Diocese of Oakland until his installation in Detroit on January 28. At that time priests in the diocesan College of Consultors will meet to elect an administrator to handle the day-to-day business of the Diocese until a new bishop is named by Pope Benedict XVI.

The process to appoint a new Bishop of Oakland will begin soon and is led by the Vatican’s diplomatic representative in the United States, Papal Nuncio Archbishop Pietro Sambi.

“The Diocese of Oakland is blessed to have had Bishop Vigneron’s leadership and pastoral care for these six years,” said Fr. George Mockel, who has served as the bishop’s vicar general. “We are sad to see him leave us but we are thankful for the leadership he has provided and for the legacy he leaves behind, which certainly includes our glorious new Cathedral of Christ the Light.”

The Diocese of Oakland was created in 1962 and is comprised of 84 parishes within Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The First Bishop of Oakland was the Most Reverend Floyd Begin who served from 1962 until his death in 1977. He was succeeded by Bishop John Cummins who retired in 2003 and was succeeded by Bishop Vigneron.

Biography

Bishop Allen Vigneron was born in Mt. Clemens, Michigan on October 21, 1948, to Elwin and Bernardine (Kott) Vigneron of Fair Haven, Michigan. The eldest of six children (four brothers, one sister), he grew up in Immaculate Conception Parish, Anchorville (a rural parish of the Archdiocese of Detroit), attending the parish grade school through eighth grade.

With encouragement from his parents, family, grade school principal and pastor, Bishop Vigneron entered the high school program of Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, in September 1962. After completing the 12th grade, he continued there for college. In June 1970, Bishop Vigneron graduated with his AB degree with majors in both Philosophy and Classical Languages.

After Sacred Heart, he was sent to Rome to continue his theological education at the Pontifical Gregorian University while living at the North American College, a house of formation for seminarians from the United States. He earned an STB (Bachelor of Sacred Theology) degree in 1973, and in 1974 returned home to serve his transitional deacon internship at St. Clement of Rome Parish, Romeo, in the Detroit Archdiocese.

Bishop Vigneron was ordained to the priesthood in the Detroit Presbyterate on July 26, 1975 at St. Clement of Rome Church, by the late Cardinal John Dearden. His first assignment as a priest was as associate pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, Harper Woods (a Detroit suburb). He returned to Rome in 1976, for a year of study to complete the work required for his STL (Licentiate in Sacred Theology) degree, which he earned from the Gregorian University in 1977. Later that year he returned to Michigan to resume his duties as associate pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

Cardinal Dearden assigned Bishop Vigneron to begin graduate studies in the School of Philosophy of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1979. He earned his MA in Philosophy in 1983 and his Ph.D. in that field in May 1987, with a dissertation on the German Philosopher, Edmund Husserl, the Father of Phenomenology. In January 1985, before completing his dissertation, Bishop Vigneron returned to Detroit to teach philosophy and theology at Sacred Heart College Seminary. In January 1988 he was appointed dean of that school and became a key member of the team working to realize Cardinal Edmund Szoka's vision for the transformation of that institution into a "major seminary" offering graduate theological education.

In the fall of 1991 Bishop Vigneron returned to Rome to serve as an official of the Administrative Section of the Vatican Secretariat of State. While there he was an adjunct instructor at the Gregorian University. In spring of 1994, Bishop Vigneron returned to Detroit to become the second Rector/President of the re-founded Sacred Heart Major Seminary.

On June 12, 1996 Bishop Vigneron was named Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, and received Episcopal ordination from Cardinal Adam Maida, the Archbishop of Detroit, on July 9 of that year. In addition to continuing to fill the office of seminary rector, Bishop Vigneron was given responsibility for the pastoral support of one of the regions into which the Detroit Archdiocese is subdivided. On 10 January 2003 he was named Coadjutor Bishop of Oakland and succeeded to the See of Oakland on 1 October 2003.

Bishop Vigneron oversaw the design and construction of the new 1300 seat Cathedral of Christ the Light situated in a complex that includes Chancery offices, conference center facilities, a bookstore and a public plaza located adjacent to Lake Merritt in downtown Oakland. The Cathedral was dedicated for sacred use on September 25, 2008.

In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Vigneron has served on the Committee for the American College in Louvain, the Committee on Doctrine and the Subcommittee on the Catechism.

Bishop Vigneron is a trustee of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, St. Patrick Seminary (Menlo Park, CA) and the Catholic University of America. He has served on the Executive Committee of the Association of Theological Schools and the board of the Detroit chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice (formerly “The National Conference of Christians and Jews”), and the board of Ave Maria University.

-end-