



*The Roman Catholic
Diocese of Phoenix*

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COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Pope Francis Names Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted As Apostolic Administrator of the Byzantine Eparchy of Phoenix

August 1, 2018

WASHINGTON—Pope Francis has appointed the Most Reverend Thomas J. Olmsted, as the Apostolic Administrator *Sede Plena* of the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix. Bishop Olmsted will also retain his current Office as Bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix.

The announcement was publicized in Washington on August 1, 2018 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Olmsted has served as the fourth Bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix since December 20, 2003.

Prior to his arrival in Phoenix, Bishop Olmsted served as Bishop of Wichita, Kansas from 2001-2003, after being ordained Coadjutor Bishop on April 20, 1999. Before serving in Wichita, he served as the Rector and President of the Pontifical College Josephinum, a Catholic Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. Since 1974, Bishop Olmsted has been a member of the Jesus Caritas fraternity of priests. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., July 2, 1973.

For 16 years, Bishop Olmsted lived in Rome, where he obtained a master's degree in theology and a doctorate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Gregorian University (1981) and worked more than nine years as an official in the Vatican Secretariat of State from 1979 to 1988. During his time in Rome, he was also an assistant spiritual director at the Pontifical North American College.

Bishop Olmsted is currently a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

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Bishop Olmsted's full statement follows:

"The Holy Father has named me as the Apostolic Administrator for the Eparchy of Phoenix, also known more formally as the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix. (An eparchy is the same as a diocese in the Roman / Latin Church.)

Let me first state that this appointment has not come about because of any personal misconduct of any kind on the part of Bishop Pazak. Indeed, Bishop Pazak remains as the Bishop of this Eparchy.

However, over the past year there have been some disagreements about administrative matters within the Byzantine Ruthenian Church here in North America, of which the Eparchy of Phoenix is a part. Because of some unfortunate legal developments in these matters, their resolution has been unnecessarily complicated, which have unintentionally endangered the peace, unity and communion within the Eastern Catholic Church.

The Holy Father has determined that it is necessary to appoint an Apostolic Administrator for the time being in order to:

- facilitate the task of resolving these legal matters, and;
- to support the efforts on everyone's part to build up the communion within among the other eparchies of the Eastern Catholic Church.

There is no fixed term to my appointment, and I am happy to serve in any way that will support my brothers and sisters in this Eparchy."

The Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix (formerly known as the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Van Nuys) is the Catholic eparchy (diocese) governing most Byzantine Ruthenian Catholics in the Western United States. The Eparchy's territorial jurisdiction consists of thirteen Western States. Currently, Holy Protection Eparchy of Phoenix has 19 parishes and one mission under its canonical jurisdiction.

The Diocese of Phoenix, Arizona comprises 43,967 square miles. It has a total population of 4,734,036 people of which 1,188,243 or 25 percent, are Catholic.

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