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Pope Francis appoints Juneau Bishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M. as Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Anchorage

A letter from Bishop Bellisario

June 12, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On June 7, I was in Seattle with retired Anchorage Archbishop Roger Schwietz, OMI, and current Fairbanks Bishop Chad Zielinski. We attended the Mass of Reception for our former Anchorage Archbishop Paul Etienne who is now the Coadjutor Archbishop of Seattle. It was a wonderful celebration attended by family and friends of Archbishop Etienne, hundreds of the faithful of Seattle, many bishops, priests, deacons, sisters, and religious. Some priests, deacons, sisters, members of the chancery staff and people from the Archdiocese of Anchorage traveled to Seattle to pray with and support Archbishop Etienne. We are deeply grateful to Archbishop Etienne for his dedicated ministry to us in the Archdiocese of Anchorage. We know first-hand the blessing he will be for the people of God in Seattle.

On the same day, Pope Francis appointed me the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Anchorage. What that means is that I will be ministering in both the Diocese of Juneau and the Archdiocese of Anchorage until the pope appoints a new archbishop for Anchorage.

You may ask, what is an apostolic administrator? An apostolic administrator is a bishop who is appointed by the pope to see to the good order and administration of a diocese or archdiocese that is awaiting the appointment of a permanent bishop or archbishop. In addition to his usual pastoral responsibilities as a bishop, the apostolic administrator has the authority to make the necessary decisions for the daily operations of, in our case, an archdiocese. Major decisions and initiatives are deferred to the new archbishop unless an urgent situation requires immediate action. The apostolic administrator is charged with deciding what issues need to be addressed during this interim period and what issues need to wait for the attention of the new archbishop. The role of the apostolic administrator ends when the new archbishop is installed. While serving as the Apostolic Administrator of Anchorage, I remain the Bishop of Juneau. I look forward to ministering in the archdiocese and working with the clergy, religious, chancery staff, and all of you.

I want to share with you a little bit about my background. I am a member of the Congregation of the Mission, which is a Society of Apostolic Life commonly called the Vincentians. The C.M. after my name stands for Congregation of the Mission. The word "Vincentian" comes from Saint Vincent de Paul who founded the Congregation in 1625. The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ evangelizing the poor.

I was missioned to the Archdiocese of Anchorage in 2015 to serve as the superior of the Vincentian mission serving the Hispanic community in Alaska. During my time in the archdiocese, I also served as a parochial vicar of St. Anthony parish for six months and then as pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral until I was named Bishop of Juneau in July of 2017. I was ordained a bishop on October 10, 2017 at Saint Paul the Apostle church in Juneau.

During this time of waiting for our new archbishop, I encourage all of us to dedicate ourselves more fully to our Lord Jesus Christ through prayer. One way I plan to do this, is with a monthly Holy Hour and Benediction at Holy Family Cathedral. My prayer intentions will be for Pope Francis and all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Anchorage. The dates and times for the monthly Holy Hour and Benediction may vary each month according to my travel schedule but will be announced in advance in order that anyone who wishes to pray before the Blessed Sacrament with the bishop has an opportunity to do so.

The Holy Hour for June is scheduled for Monday, June 24 at 6:00 p.m. at Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage. Benediction will follow at 7:00 p.m. The Holy Hour for July is scheduled for Monday, July 8 at 6:00 p.m. at Holy Family Cathedral with Benediction following at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome!

Finally, I assure you of my prayers and humbly ask you to pray for me.

Many blessings and peace,

Bishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M.