

Miguel H. Díaz named U.S ambassador to the Vatican

Thomas C. Fox | May. 27, 2009



Díaz

A Hispanic Roman Catholic theologian who was an adviser to Barack Obama's presidential campaign will be nominated to serve as the next U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, the White House announced Wednesday.

Miguel H. Díaz, 45, an associate professor of theology at St. John's University and the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota, would be the first Hispanic to serve as ambassador to the Vatican since the United States and the Holy See established full diplomatic ties in 1984. Díaz was born in Havana.

Díaz, [viewed as a dark horse candidate for the post](#) [1], is the co-editor of the book "From the Heart of Our People: Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology" and author of "On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives", named "Best Book of the Year" by the Hispanic Theological Initiative at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Díaz taught Religious Studies and Theology at Barry University, the University of Dayton and the University of Notre Dame. From 2001 to 2003, he taught and served as Academic Dean at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida.

Professor Miguel Díaz is a skilled Trinitarian theologian who is passionate both as a teacher and a scholar, said Benedictine Abbot John Klassen of Saint John's Abbey. He is a strong proponent of the necessity of the Church to become deeply and broadly multi-cultural, to recognize and appreciate the role that culture plays in a living faith.

The Catholics in Alliance, a Catholic lobbying group, praised the Díaz appointment.

"A theological consultant to, and commentator for, Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, Professor Díaz has always connected his impressive body of academic scholarship and intellectual rigor with an unwavering commitment to living out the social justice tenets of our faith," the group said.

Catholics United executive director Chris Korzen also issued a statement praising the Díaz appointment:

Catholics United is thrilled to learn that Dr. Miguel Diaz has been nominated as U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. Dr. Diaz is a devout Catholic, a respected theologian, a leader in the Catholic Latino community, and a dedicated husband and father of four children. We have full confidence that he will serve our nation well and we invite all Catholics to join us in celebrating this historic nomination.

The Administration and the Holy See share many common concerns, such as protecting the environment, fostering peace in the Middle East, disarming nuclear arsenals and cultivating international development, especially for the poorest nations of the world. Dr. Diaz's ability to work constructively for common ground makes him a superb choice for this position."

Diaz was far from the most visible or controversial Catholic to campaign for Obama. Douglas Kmiec, a Catholic law professor and former Reagan administration lawyer, was targeted by conservative Catholics and denied Communion by one priest for his support for Obama.

The Associated Press reported that Kmiec, who was mentioned as a possible Vatican envoy, applauded the choice of Diaz on Wednesday, calling him "a gifted theologian and a natural teacher. And his love for the faith is unquestioned."

Meanwhile, St. John's University lists on its website Diaz' notable activities:

- Theological consultant on the Colledgeville Ministry Seminar II (advancing the theology of vocation and authorization for lay ecclesial ministry) co-sponsored by Saint John's School of Theology Seminary and the USCCB (2009-).
- Invited colloquist for the 2008-2009 Wabash Consultation on Excellence in Teaching for Latino/a Faculty at Colleges, Universities, and Theological Schools, 2008-2009.
- Board Member of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), 2008-2010.
- Member of the Karl Rahner Society (KRS) and a board member of the KRS steering committee.
- Member of Barack Obama's Catholic advisory group during the 2008 presidential campaign. In recognition of his participation in the advisory council, Dr. Díaz and his wife Marian received an invitation to the inaugural events. Dr. Díaz's involvement in the campaign and participation in the inaugural events were both covered extensively in a variety of media.
- President of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS), 2006-07.
- Colloquist with Walter Cardinal Kasper at the Duquesne University Annual Holy Spirit Lecture and Colloquium entitled, "The Spirit in the New Millennium," 2006.
- Invited to participate at the CTSA annual convention in San Antonio in a discussion of Rahner Beyond Rahner, 2006.
- Invited to participate in a national conversation on immigration
- Invited to participate as a theological consultant to the Catholic Alliance for the Common Good, Washington, DC, January, 2006.
- Organized the 2006 annual colloquium of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) in conjunction with the Black Catholic Theological Symposium (BCTS).

- Invited by Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB, President of Saint John's University to co-chair the president's Inter-Cultural Directions Council (IDC), 2005-.
- He is a Board Member of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) and Past President of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS). Díaz holds a B.A. from St. Thomas University and a M.A. and PhD in Theology from the University of Notre Dame.

In a [comment posted to the NCR web site](#) [2], Carmen Nanko-Fernández, president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United State, said the association was "encouraged" by the nomination. "This nomination affirms the important contribution that Hispanics are making as part of the fabric of our nation," she wrote.

A statement on the academy's web site, achtus.org [3], praised Diaz: "Díaz embodies in his scholarship and commitments a profound respect for human dignity and a passion for justice. A Catholic layman, Díaz and his family are devoted participants in the life of the Church."

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