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Former Detroit seminary rector named bishop of Steubenville

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VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI has named Msgr. Jeffrey M. Monforton, rector-president of Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit for the past six years, as bishop of Steubenville, Ohio.

The appointment was announced Tuesday at the Vatican.

Monforton, 49, succeeds Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, 63, who was named in May 2011 as bishop of Joliet, Ill.

The new bishop also served from 1998 to 2005 as priest-secretary to now-retired Cardinal Adam J. Maida, who was then archbishop of Detroit, and had most recently been pastor of St. Andrew Parish in Rochester, the Detroit Archdiocese's largest parish.

No date has been set for his episcopal ordination and installation as bishop of Steubenville.

"I am very grateful and deeply humbled for our Holy Father to entrust me with the faithful of the Steubenville Diocese," Monforton said in a statement.

"The Lord has blessed me on this Christian pilgrimage to shepherd the good people of St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Andrew faith communities, as well as to prepare the future priests and ecclesial ministers while rector at Sacred Heart Major Seminary," he added. "I've been blessed to serve Cardinal Maida as his secretary, and equally thankful for the faith Archbishop (Allen H.) Vigneron has had in me for these last three years."

Vigneron praised Monforton as "an exemplary priest and a zealous pastor."

"He will be greatly missed here, but the Lord has called him to greater responsibility for shepherding his flock," the archbishop added.

Born May 5, 1963, in Detroit, Jeffrey Monforton studied for the priesthood at Sacred Heart Seminary and at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He earned a bachelor's and licentiate in theology and a doctorate in spiritual theology from Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

Ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit on June 25, 1994, he served as parochial vicar at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak before becoming secretary to Maida.

He served as pastor of St. Therese of Lisieux Parish in Shelby Township from 2005 to 2006, when he was named seminary rector. During his tenure at Sacred Heart, the seminarian population grew to its largest in 38 years. The institution also began online courses and established satellite classes at parishes around the archdiocese.

In 2005 the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education named Monforton as one of the visitors for the apostolic visitation of U.S. seminaries that took place during the 2005-06 academic year.

The Diocese of Steubenville, established in 1944, has 39,000 Catholics, 58 parishes and 16 schools. It also is home to Franciscan University of Steubenville.

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