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Kansas bishop to replace retiring Iowa archbishop; Fargo gets new bishop

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Jerome Hanus of the archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, and named Bishop Michael Jackels of Wichita, Kan., as his successor.

The pope also appointed Msgr. John Folda, a seminary rector in Nebraska, to be the bishop of Fargo, N.D. He succeeds Archbishop Samuel Aquila, who was named to head the Denver archdiocese in May 2012.

The changes were announced Monday in Washington by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Hanus, a Benedictine, has said he plans to return to life as a monk in Missouri after he leaves Dubuque. He will remain apostolic administrator until his successor's installation, scheduled for May 30. The archbishop turns 73 on May 26; he is retiring a couple of years earlier than the age -- 75 -- at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation.

Jackels is 58 and has headed the Wichita diocese since 2005. A native of Rapid City, S.D., he is a priest of the diocese of Lincoln, Neb. Before being named to the Kansas diocese by Pope John Paul II, he was on the staff of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome for eight years.

"It has been a great experience for me to pray and work with the priests, religious, and lay faithful of the Diocese of Wichita, to yoke ourselves together, sharing responsibility to continue the mission of Jesus in his church here," the new archbishop said in a statement.

"I am confident that I will be able to say the same about the Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Dubuque," he added.

Jackels said that it was "with no little sadness that I prepare to leave" the Kansas diocese, "but in light of Mary's response to God's call to be the mother of the Savior, or of the example of Pope Francis who cheerfully took up a new and demanding ministry, how could I not say 'yes.' Let us pray for one another in this time of transition."

Folda, 51, will be ordained at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Fargo sometime in June, according to a news release from the Lincoln diocese, where the newly named bishop has been rector of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward since 1999. The native of Omaha, Neb., was ordained for the Lincoln diocese May 27, 1989.

"Although I never expected to become a bishop or to leave this diocese, I feel great joy at the opportunity God has given me to serve him in a new way," he said in a statement. "I am thrilled to go to Fargo. ... I also am quite aware of my own limitations, so I'm a little apprehensive about taking on the responsibilities of a bishop."

But he added that he trusted God to "lead me and give me the grace I need to carry out the office of bishop."

Lincoln Bishop James Conley said the Nebraska diocese rejoiced with the North Dakota diocese on the appointment of the new bishop.

"I have known Msgr. Folda for over 20 years, and I know that he will be a stellar bishop," Conley said.

He said Folda's "keen intelligence, his personal humility and his dedication to Jesus Christ and his church" has prepared him well "to teach, govern and sanctify the faithful of the Diocese of Fargo."

Aquila congratulated his successor in Fargo, calling him "a man of deep faith, warm leadership, and unwavering fidelity to the teachings of the church. My heart is filled with joy for the church of Fargo."

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