

Tulsa's Msgr. Wells Promoted to top Vatican Post



Msgr. Peter B. Wells

7/21/2009 - Catholic News Service

Native Tulsan Msgr. Peter Wells, the first Oklahoman appointed to serve the Holy See, was named July 16 to a critical position in the Vatican's Office of the Secretary of State. Msgr. Wells' appointment was effective immediately.

His new post is known as Assessore of General Affairs, and the 46-year-old monsignor succeeds Archbishop (elect) Gabriele Giordano Caccia. Since 2006, Msgr. Wells had headed up the English Desk, through which all material and correspondence in English going to or coming from the Holy See must pass. As head of the English Desk, Msgr. Wells was one of just two others to sit in on July's private meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and President Barack Obama in the pontiff's study. Archbishop Caccia will become the papal nuncio to Lebanon.

"This is a wonderful honor for all the priests of the Diocese of Tulsa," said Bishop Edward J. Slattery. "Together with all the priests, deacons and lay faithful of the Diocese, I personally want to send my warmest congratulations to Msgr. Wells, who served at our Cathedral as associate pastor, inaugurated our Pastoral Studies Institute and offered me enormous support as ecclesiastical secretary when I came to the Diocese in 1994."

Msgr. Wells, who was ordained in 1991, also served as assistant chaplain at St. John Medical Center, associate chaplain at Bishop Kelley High School, a judge on the Marriage Tribunal, vicar for religious education and assistant to Msgr. Dan Mueggenborg in the religious education department.

He is a graduate of the Pontifical Ecclesial Academy in Rome where he studied international law and Papal diplomacy. He received his doctorate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Gregorian University. The diplomat speaks French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin and Greek. At one time, Msgr. Wells served at the Holy See's embassy in Lagos, Nigeria.

The Secretariat of State is the office that works most closely with the Pope in the exercise of his mission as universal shepherd. It serves as a kind of clearinghouse for all the information and documents that pass from the curia to the Pope and vice versa.

It also is the most venerable Vatican office, with roots extending back to 1487. Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone, S.D.B., currently serves as Cardinal-Secretary of the office.

The Secretariat is divided into two branches: the First Section for General Affairs and the Second Section, which handles relations with foreign states. The position of Cardinal-Secretary is the rough equivalent to the Holy See's prime minister, so Cardinal Bertone's two top aides – Archbishop Fernando Filoni, the Sostito (Substitute) for General Affairs and Msgr. Wells, now his Assessore (Auditor) can be understood as enjoying responsibilities similar to that of the chief of staff and deputy chief of staff.

Msgr. Wells will coordinate the work of all language desks that handle the flow of information within the various Vatican offices and from outside the Vatican. This includes preparing for publication all papal documents and public letters and assisting the Substitute in his duties regarding many of the elements of the Vatican media.

Bishop Slattery noted that Msgr. Wells is noted for combining energy and enthusiasm with a sincere love for the Church. "I always marveled at Peter's competence and dedication. God has blessed Peter in many, many ways, and now, through Peter, He has blessed both the local and the Universal Church."