

Pope appoints archbishop for Santa Fe, N.M.

New prelate will deal with abuse

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pope John Paul II last week named Bishop Michael J. Sheehan of Lubbock, Texas, as new archbishop of Santa Fe, N.M.

Archbishop Sheehan, 54, is especially noted for his work in evangelization.

He has been apostolic administrator of the Santa Fe archdiocese since April 6, when Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez resigned amid allegations that he had been engaged in improper conduct with several young women in the 1970s and '80s.

The new archbishop has been bishop of Lubbock since that rural western Texas diocese was formed 10 years ago.

Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, papal pro-nuncio to the United States, announced the appointment in Washington Aug. 17.

In a telephone interview Archbishop Sheehan told Catholic News Service that since April he has spent more than half his time in New Mexico — much of it meeting with priests and people around the Santa Fe archdiocese and trying to deal with their hurt and disillusionment over the allegations of sexual misconduct by Archbishop Sanchez and a number of priests.



AP/Wide World Photos
Then-Bishop Michael J. Sheehan (right) gets a congratulatory hug from Bishop Donald Pelotte after Archbishop Sheehan was named to lead the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, N.M., Aug. 17.

blow. He is much loved and a native son."

He said in the past four months he has also accepted and started implementing a new archdiocesan policy to deal with issues of sexual misconduct by priests. The policy was recommended by a commission formed by Archbishop Sanchez before his resignation.

As part of the new policy, Archbishop Sheehan said, he has:

- Formed a permanent review board to investigate all allegations of clergy misconduct.
- Established a "counseling fund to help people receive the care that they need" if they have been victimized by a priest.
- Removed from ministry any priests found guilty of child abuse and tightened screening processes for seminarians.

Archbishop Sheehan is scheduled to be installed as 11th archbishop of Santa Fe in ceremonies at the Albuquerque civic center Sept. 21. Most archdiocesan offices are located in Albuquerque.

He is to remain apostolic administrator of Lubbock until his installation in Santa Fe, after which diocesan consultants will meet to elect an administrator from among the priests of the Lubbock diocese.

Michael Jarboe Sheehan was born in Wichita, Kan., July 9, 1939. He attended Catholic schools in Texarkana, Texas, and studied for the priesthood at St. John's Seminary and Assumption Seminary in San Antonio.

He completed his priesthood formation at the North American College and Gregorian University in Rome, where he was ordained a priest of the Dallas-Fort Worth diocese July 12, 1964.

After three years as an associate pastor in Tyler, 1965-68, he returned to Rome for further studies, earning a doctorate in canon law at the Lateran University in 1971.

"Mainly I've tried to be a pastor ... The people have been hurt deeply ... I've been making the rounds to the parishes, asking their pardon in the name of the church," he said.

"I've focused especially on the needs of the priests," he added. "The priests are hurting because a number of their group have been accused of misconduct with minors." On top of that "the loss of their archbishop is a terrible

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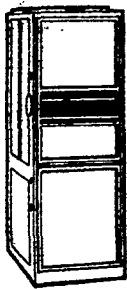
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