

ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

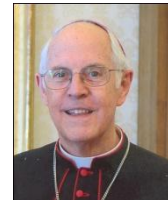
4000 Saint Joseph Place NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120-1714

Press Release

Celine B. Radigan, Director
Voice 505.831.8180, FAX 505.831.8248, cradigan@archdiosf.org www.archdiosf.org

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Friday, January 11, 2013 - IMMEDIATE RELEASE-- Pope Benedict XVI has chosen Most Reverend Ricardo Ramírez's, C.S.B, successor. Bishop Ramirez was the first and only Roman Catholic Bishop of Las Cruces. Bishop Ramirez announced the name of his successor Bishop Oscar Cantú, S.T.D, at a press conference at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Thursday, January 10, 2013.

I am delighted that Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Bishop Oscar Cantú, S.T.D, previously titular of Dardano and auxiliary of San Antonio, as the next bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces. He is a young man totally bilingual and bicultural and will continue the wonderful Hispanic Ministry that Bishop Ramirez has given since the establishment of the diocese 30 years ago. Bishop Cantú will bring new energy and many talents to the Diocese of Las Cruces. As Archbishop of Santa Fe, I have worked very closely with the Bishops of Las Cruces and Gallup and I am pleased to welcome Bishop Cantú to New Mexico. We are deeply grateful, Bishop Ramirez, for your steadfast leadership and faithful service. May God bless you abundantly! Most Rev. Michael J. Sheehan, Archbishop of Santa Fe



Bishop Ramirez announced his retirement on his 75th birthday in 2011. Since that time, Bishop Ramírez has been leading the diocese in prayer for a new bishop, a leader who will guide with wisdom, truth, compassion and care.

In 1982, Bishop Ramírez was appointed by Pope John Paul II to lead the newly formed Diocese of Las Cruces. Bishop accepted the position and took his newly formed diocese from a blank sheet of paper to the thriving diocese that it is today, 30 years later. Along the way he became one of the most preeminent Hispanic bishops in the country.

Bishop Ramírez is an educator, theologian, peacemaker, and spiritual leader for all faiths. Bishop is well-known for his unifying multicultural and ecumenical approach to evangelization and service. During the last three decades, Bishop Ramírez reached out to others to build communities of love, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. Bishop Ramírez is a humble shepherd whose lifelong endeavors have made a unique contribution in affirming life's spiritual dimension.

Bishop Ramírez's exemplary spiritual leadership has impacted the hearts of people throughout southern New Mexico, the nation and the world. Bishop is recognized globally for his work on behalf of international religious freedom, his pastoral letters dealing with handing on the faith to the next generations, border issues, and domestic violence. Bishop Ramírez is a nominee for the 2013 Templeton Prize.

Through the grace of God, Bishop organized a strong diocese. Bishop will hand over to his successor, a diocese that is a unique church with its own identity, its own gifts and its own challenges.



Bishop Oscar Cantú, S.T.D, was ordained to the priesthood in 1994 and received episcopal ordination in 2008. In the national bishops' conference he currently serves on the committees on Catholic Education, International Justice and Peace, and Protection of Children and Young People, as well as the Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs. He succeeds Bishop Ricardo Ramirez C.S.B., whose resignation from the pastoral care of the same diocese the Holy Father accepted, upon having reached the age limit.

Bishop Oscar Cantú, S.T.D was born December 5, 1966, in Houston, TX, the son of Ramiro and Maria de Jesus Cantú, natives of small towns near Monterey in Mexico. He is the fifth of eight children, five boys, and three girls. Bishop Cantú is a product of Houston's Catholic Schools, attending Holy Name Catholic School and St. Thomas High School. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Dallas, TX.

He then received his Masters in Divinity and Masters in Theological Studies from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He continued the Pontifical Gregorian University, located in Rome Italy where he earned his S.T.L. Licentiate in Sacred Theology, as well as his S.T.D., Doctorate in Sacred Theology in Dogmatic Theology . Bishop Cantú was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Houston on May 21, 1994.

He has spent his priestly career working in parishes throughout the Houston metropolitan area. His first assignment following his ordination was as parochial vicar at St. Christopher Parish in Houston. Since 2003, he has taught at University of St. Thomas in Houston. He also has taught at St. Thomas at St. Mary's Seminary. Bishop Cantú is fluent in Spanish, Italian, and French.

His last assignment before he was ordained a bishop was pastor at Houston's Holy Name Parish, his childhood parish where, in the early 60's, his parents became close friends with a young priest, Father Patrick Flores, who went on to become the Archbishop of San Antonio.

Cantú's father immigrated to the United States as a young man. He worked in Chicago where he learned to be a machinist. Tired of the cold weather and the long distance from his native country, he moved his wife and two children to Houston.

While Mr. Cantú only received a 6th grade education, his life of hard work taught him to place a high value on education. Seven of his eight children attended Catholic schools in Houston at a great financial sacrifice for the family, four of them went on to college, three of them have attained their master s degrees. While still a seminarian, Bishop Cantu worked on a committee made up of diocesan leaders and chaired by Laredo's Bishop James Tamayo. Its purpose was to develop, promulgate, and promote a plan for Hispanic ministry.

Since his ordination, Bishop Cantú has participated in number of ministries and movements in Houston. He was involved in the Christian Family movement, a national network of parish/neighborhood small groups of Catholics and their families who come together to reinforce their Christian values and are encouraged to reach out to others. He conducted three retreats per year with the youth of the CFM movement in the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese. Bishop Cantu worked with those preparing for marriage through the Engaged Encounter ministry.

From 2004 to 2007 Bishop Cantú co-hosted an interfaith radio show in Houston called "Show of Faith." His co-hosts included a Jewish rabbi and a protestant minister. The program discussed issues from the perspective of their individual faith traditions.

Bishop Cantú has also been involved in The Metropolitan Organization (TMO). Its mission is to publicly address important social issues in the community such as fair housing, immigration, education and many others. *(Info courtesy Diocese of Las Cruces)*--END