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# Christ is our Hope

*Cristo Es Nuestra Esperanza*

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DIOCESE WELCOMES  
**NEW AUXILIARY  
BISHOP**

# DIOCESE WELCOMES



## NEW AUXILIARY BISHOP

Bishop-designate Joseph Siegel, 46, will be ordained to be the diocese's new auxiliary bishop on Jan. 19 at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in Joliet. He was born in Joliet and was raised on a farm in Lockport Township. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 4, 1988, by Bishop Joseph Imesch at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet. He was assigned as parochial vicar at St. Isidore Parish, Bloomingdale; St. Mary Immaculate Parish, Plainfield; St. Mary Nativity Parish, Joliet; and the Cathedral of St. Raymond, Joliet, where he also served as diocesan master of ceremonies. He has been pastor at Visitation Parish in Elmhurst since 2004 and will remain there as pastor until June 2010. Recently, Carlos Briceño interviewed Bishop-designate Siegel and several friends and family members to find out more about him. Here are their comments:



**Bishop Peter Sartain:**

[The appointment of Bishop-designate Joseph Siegel] is an answer to prayer. I have been praying for the new auxiliary bishop of Joliet even before I knew who he was, simply asking the Lord to give us someone who could help us and help lead us all more closely to Jesus. I was thrilled when I heard from the Papal Nuncio [in October] that the Holy Father had chosen Bishop Siegel – truly an answer to prayer. It made me very happy.

**Bishop-designate Joseph Siegel:**

I got the news [of the appointment] during the first night of our convocation for the priests. Bishop Sartain asked to go meet him in his room because he wanted to show me something. I came in and sat down, and he handed me a box and in the box was a zucchetto [a skullcap worn by a bishop]. It was a sign that Pope Benedict asked if I was willing to serve as a bishop. I was stunned to say the least.

**Bishop Peter Sartain:**

The work of an auxiliary bishop is to assist the diocesan bishop in the governance and the spiritual leadership of the diocese, and so there will be various activities that he will do as the assistant to me in governing our diocese – not only liturgically, for example, with confirmations throughout the year – but also in the administration of our diocese in particular areas of ministry that we will decide in the coming months.

**Bishop-designate Joseph Siegel:**

Part of the promise we make at ordination is the promise of obedience and just trusting in the Holy Spirit. I've had some sleepless nights after [being told of his appointment]. I felt there were more priests much more qualified and more worthy than I was. I was praying for the Holy Spirit to help me to know God's will and then a sense of peace came from that, just giving it to the Lord. There are going to be challenges; there's going to be a big learning curve ahead, but there's a sense that this is what God is



Bishop-designate Siegel meets Pope John Paul II at the diaconate ordination in May 1988 at the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican.

calling me to. It's not what I had planned, but somehow God has bigger plans, a better plan, and I'm trying to give myself over to that.

**Bishop Peter Sartain:**

He's a native son. He's from the Joliet area. He went to the cathedral in Joliet. He was baptized there, confirmed there and ordained there, as well as going to the grade school there, so his total background is immersed right here in our diocese. And, since his ordination to the priesthood in 1988, he's served in a variety of parishes. Also, the people and the priests in our diocese have often recognized his talents and called upon him in leadership roles, whether it's on the Priests' Council or the Personnel Board and all kinds of other committees. Everyone recognizes Father Siegel's love for the Lord and the very competent way he goes about his work and how much he loves the priesthood, too, and that's a great inspiration to all of us in the Diocese of Joliet.

**Richard Siegel, Bishop-designate Siegel's brother:**

He used to play Mass as a kid. He was probably 5 or 6 when he started doing that. It never left being a reality. All the family has been very, very church-oriented. He was a choir boy; he was an altar boy.



A young Bishop-designate Siegel poses on his first Communion day, which took place on Thanksgiving in 1969.

Church was a very integral part of all of our lives. Most of our social stuff dealt around the church and so there were few other distractions for him. . . . I think he's exceptionally patient and exceptionally holy. He's a good communicator. He can administer the laws of the church without being obnoxious about it. I think he will make a good administrator. His holiness

will keep him where he needs to be regarding the spiritual aspects of his position.

**Debbie Guerrero (Deacon Manuel's wife), St. Mary Immaculate Parish, Plainfield:**

[My husband and I] have known him for 17 years. We first met him at St. Mary Immaculate Parish [in Plainfield]. He was there as a parochial vicar. He invited us to be part of a wedding coordinator ministry. That's how we developed a friendship. He's a very spiritual man. I think he will be a good shepherd to the people of the Joliet diocese. He's a leader that way and a good listener. He's a wonderful listener. If you ask him for advice, he will give you advice in a very prayerful way. I think the example that he will be is not just for adults, but children, for the young men of the diocese. Maybe, through him, more young men will follow the priesthood because of his story, and his example will be wonderful for this whole diocese.

**Deacon Manuel Guerrero (Debbie's husband), St. Mary Immaculate Parish, Plainfield:**

He's a priest's priest. From the minute we met him, he's a great individual. He's caring, and I really believe he's going to bring depth and spirituality to the diocese. One of the things that comes up over and over again whenever I've talked to anyone, is "Do you know Father Siegel? Oh, isn't he a great priest?" That's usually the response you get from anybody you talk to. And great in every respect. I've never seen him in a state of mind where he's flustered or can't handle things, and he always says the right thing. God chose the right person. That's who is doing all the deciding. All I can say is the choice was the correct choice, and there's no mistake in the selection.

**Father Matthew Pratscher, parochial vicar at the bishop-designate's parish, Visitation in Elmhurst:**

He's such a good pastor. He's a shepherd's shepherd. He's a very gentle man. He's very firm in the truth. But, he's also very pastoral. He's a very easy man to talk to. He listens, and he listens well. He's a hard worker. But he's never afraid to say, "Let's pray. Let's pray."

**Deacon Ken Jackson, St. Daniel the Prophet Parish in Wheaton:**

He is a very holy, sin-



Standing fourth from the right, Bishop-designate Siegel poses with his graduating class from St. Charles Borromeo High school in Romeoville in 1980.

cere, intelligent and very friendly type of person. You can relate to him very easily. He is very, very good to the deacons, to me in particular. He's not of the world; he's of the church, and I think he takes that very seriously.

**Father John Balluff,  
pastor of St. Mary  
Parish in West  
Chicago:**

Bishop Siegel and I are classmates and good friends. On occasion our friendship meant Joe coming along on some of my adventures, like sailing. I had a little sailboat, and [one day] we took it out on Lake Geneva.

The wind came up. Joe was front and center and, because he is such a big guy, he took all the wind and was soaked by the spray. I remained relatively dry behind him. The bishop leads like a shepherd by being out in front. He will take the wind and the spray of some of the difficulties of being an institution in an unsettled world. Those of us who stay dry need to pray for him.

**Father Tom Sularz,  
pastor at St. Daniel the Prophet in Wheaton:**  
I've known Bishop Siegel since he was in the



Bishop-designate Siegel, second from left, stands with the other newly ordained priests, along with the then bishops of the diocese, on their ordination day in 1988.

seminary, close to 30 years now. The first thing he has is a deep love for the Lord Jesus. He is a very compassionate, very understanding man. He has negotiation skills when he deals with people. He is very open to other opinions and other sides of issues, and he tries to look at a number of things before he makes any final decisions. I knew his mother and father. They were people of deep faith. They went to Mass every day. They themselves had a deep love for priests. They passed that on to all their children and certainly to Bishop Siegel. When he was in the seminary, he would help me when I was the pastor at Holy Family Parish [in Shorewood]. He would help me when he would come home, like for Holy Week, for the major services. He would train the servers and get everything ready. One of the things I remember is we were going to use the baptismal font for the Easter vigil, and it was in bad shape. I didn't say anything to him about doing anything about the font. He literally spent hours cleaning that font. It looked like a brand new baptismal font when he was through with it.

**Mary Wheaton,  
Bishop-designate Siegel's sister:**

He is wherever the Holy Spirit leads him. He's willing to go, whether it's as a parish priest or auxiliary bishop. Whatever job you give him, his whole heart goes into it, and he does it full force – nothing about just getting by. He will do a good job whatever he's asked to do. ☺



Bishop-designate Siegel smiles with his parents on the day of his ordination to the priesthood, June 4, 1988.