



**Statement by Most Rev. Felipe de Jesús Estévez
Bishop-designate of the Diocese of St. Augustine
Wednesday, April 27, 2011
Catholic Center, Jacksonville, Fla.**

In this octave of Easter, I extend Easter greetings to all of you. Feliz Pascua Florida! May the peace and joy of the Risen Lord be with you.

The Vatican announced this morning that I am to become the new shepherd for the Diocese of St. Augustine chosen by His Holiness Benedict XVI. It is a great honor to be chosen as the tenth Bishop of the See of St. Augustine, Florida. This is a wonderful diocese that holds such a sacred place in the history of the Church in North America and most especially in Florida.

I am most grateful to Bishop Victor Galeone for his exemplary stewardship over this last decade. I know Bishop Galeone has expressed deep gratitude to the leadership of his predecessor Bishop John Snyder. I do hope Bishops Galeone and Snyder's wisdom will be shared with me.

I want to bring good tidings to all our cities and parishes and educational and charitable institutions. I pledge my total dedication to the people of God in this Northeastern part of Florida in its rich diversity and profound unity.

I am deeply honored to come to you – this time from the south – for this is a land where the story of the first evangelization in North America finds its heroic beginnings. It is a land of martyrs and many creative missionaries and educators, a land where ingenious pastoral practices developed to meet the people in their culture, multiple languages and races. For many years I have come to this diocese as a pilgrim in search of its roots, walking on ancient streets and embracing anew its magnificent stories.

Today, I come for good for I deeply want to be part of you. I am convinced it is the will of the Eternal Father revealed by the Church's mediation that we serve together our people in their journey of faith, hope and love – a people destined to act as a sacrament to society in its quest for peace and justice for all.

In imitation of the Christ, the Spouse of the Church, I am committed to love you to the end (John 13, 1). I do hope in turn to receive from clergy and faithful all the support and collaboration. It is not my personal success that matters but the fruitfulness that God intends for all of us.

I deeply respect and value the pastoral care that priests, deacons, religious and committed laity are doing as hard workers of God's vineyard ... You are the present face of the living Christ in our midst in Northeastern Florida. We have a lot to do together for Christ and his Church in this second decade of this new millennium.

I want to work along the lines of what (future) Blessed John Paul II outlined for the future:

*No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a "new program." The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This program for all times is our program for the Third Millennium. (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29).*

This program energizes me. It is often called "the new evangelization" ... With you, I will seek the coming of the Eucharistic kingdom of Christ confident that Mary the star of evangelization will help us all. In her care, let us spread the Eucharistic love of Jesus to the youth and our families, to the poor, to the sick and the suffering humanity. I entrust my new pastoral care to Mary the Eucharistic woman.

I intend to move for good at the beginning of June. I seek your prayers for my installation on June 1st in the context of a Vespers service at the Cathedral-Basilica of St. Augustine followed by a Mass of thanksgiving on Thursday, June 2 at 2 p.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jacksonville. The nature of the event is the making of an apostolic succession, which in fact, this Diocese of St. Augustine has experienced so many times.

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