

Press conference reveals man who will lead diocese

By Malea Hargett
EDITOR

Pope John Paul II accepted the resignation of Bishop Andrew J. McDonald and appointed Memphis-native Father James

Peter Sartain as the sixth bishop of Little Rock.

Bishop-designate Sartain, vicar general and pastor in the Diocese of Memphis, is scheduled to be ordained Monday, March 6 in Little Rock. The location has not been decided.



Bishop-elect Sartain

The announcement was made Jan. 4 during a press conference at St. John Catholic Center in Little Rock. While both bishops were aware of the appointment since Dec. 22, it was a closely guarded secret until the announcement was made in front of the media and diocesan employees.

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"I am a native Tennessean, as were both my parents; and having lived my entire life, except for seminary years in Memphis, I have always felt a special kinship to Arkansas," Bishop-designate Sartain (pronounced "Sar-tin") said in a prepared statement.

The new bishop made his diocesan employees feel at ease when he told them of his experiences visiting family and friends in the state. He said he has prayed for the Catholics in Arkansas every day since he learned of his new ministry.

"I am pleased and excited that Arkansas



Father J. Peter Sartain shakes hands with his predecessor, Bishop McDonald, before a press conference at St. John Catholic Center in Little Rock.

"Twenty-seven years ago, the late Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, chose an Andrew to shepherd the Church of Arkansas, the Diocese of Little Rock. Today, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has brought Peter to Andrew."

— Bishop McDonald

will now be my home," he said.

He was quick to thank Bishop McDonald for helping him in the transition.

"Today I would also like to express my deep thanks to Bishop Andrew McDonald, who has helped calm my fears over the past two weeks with kindness and good humor," he said.

Bishop McDonald noted that the men's first names are biblical brothers.

"The Holy Father has kept it in the family. I'm Andrew; he's Peter," he said with a laugh. "That makes us brothers."

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