

**Bishop Patrick J. Zurek
January 4, 2008**

On Tuesday, December 18, 2007, while working at my desk, the telephone rang. It was about 10:30am. I responded with the traditional ‘hello’ and immediately I heard, “This is Archbishop Pietro Sambi”. “I have good news for you, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has appointed you as the eighth Bishop of Amarillo!”

It happened so quickly, in a ‘matter of fact’ business way, that before I knew it, He congratulated me and wished me a Blessed Christmas and greetings from the Pope and that was the extent of the conversation.

I sat there for a while, just wondering what had happened. Of course, I was happy. I was excited. I thought of the changes that would happen, and again quickly.

Soon I began to realize that I would have to leave San Antonio. It has been my home for 10 years. I have made many wonderful friends here. I have had some great experiences here.

When I first arrived here I was a little concerned with my Spanish, but that proved to be no problem at all. I was also concerned about coming from another diocese, but the priests, deacons, religious and people greeted me with open arms.

I am especially grateful to Archbishop Patrick Flores for welcoming me as a brother and son and for the trust and love he shared with me. I am also very grateful to Archbishop José Gomez for his fraternal support and guidance during his time here.

Perhaps the greatest experience I had here was to assist with the implementation of the Archdiocesan Synod. It immediately placed me in the middle of the action with the priests, deacons, religious and the lay leadership of the archdiocese. It involved a lot work and a lot of travel, but it was such a period of Grace and readiness to make the archdiocese better and stronger in Faith and its practice.

What I will miss about San Antonio are the people. They are so loving and kind. They have always been so welcoming and eager to learn more about our Faith and to grow in our Catholic Spirituality. I will also miss the interaction and cooperation with the non-Catholic Christian Communities and my relations with the Jewish and Islamic Communities. I have been honored to be a part of this beautiful dialogue and partnership that began here many decades ago.

In regard to Amarillo, it will certainly be a change. It is much smaller than San Antonio. It is very rural. The weather is certainly much colder! I love plants, especially tropical ones. There will need to be an adjustment. However, I have learned long ago, “People are people, where ever they may be and regardless of the culture of the political system under which they live.”

I look forward to meeting the people of Amarillo and being their shepherd. I would like to thank Bishop John Yanta for his dedication and years of service here. I look forward to learning much from him and also from the priests, religious and people here in Amarillo.

As I told the Pope, “I will love them. I will serve them with all my strength and heart. I will teach them all that the Catholic Church teaches. And I will try to preach so as to animate their souls and spirits to give even better witness to Christ Jesus in the Catholic Church.

Again, I thank all the people of San Antonio for accepting me, being patient with me, for loving me and for giving me the opportunity to have been a humble servant of Jesus Christ in your midst. God bless you all. You will always remain in my heart, in my memories and in my prayers. Please remember me in your prayers also!

**✠ Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek, Bishop-Designate of Amarillo,
Remarks given at the Pastoral Center
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