



Pope Francis names new Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

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Vatican City, Oct 24, 2020 / 04:06 am MT (CNA).- Pope Francis named Italian Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa as the new Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Saturday. Pizzaballa has served as apostolic administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem since 2016, while the office of Latin Patriarch has remained vacant. The Oct. 24 appointment ends a four-year wait for the estimated 293,000 Latin Catholics in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and Cyprus for a new patriarch.

Pizzaballa, a 55-year-old Franciscan friar, has lived in the Holy Land since 1990. The former Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land succeeds Jordanian-born Patriarch Emeritus Fouad Twal, who led the patriarchate from 2008 to 2016.

When Pizzaballa was appointed apostolic administrator, the Latin Patriarchate was on the verge of bankruptcy from debts amounting to more than \$100 million.

In an [interview](#) with EWTN News in Rome on Wednesday, Pizzaballa said: "They have been four difficult years. I had a very clear mandate: first to put order in the administration."

He reorganized the patriarchate's financial management, put in place new internal and external controls, and created more transparency.

He was able to pay the debt with help from international donations, by cutting expenses, and with some property sales in Nazareth.

As apostolic administrator, Pizzaballa oversaw the patriarchate together with the Italian-born auxiliary Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo, whose resignation, for the reason of age, was accepted by Pope Francis in August.

Pizzaballa -- who speaks Italian, Hebrew, and English -- told EWTN News that he was also given the task of improving the pastoral situation in the Holy Land, including creating more unity among the priests and the different Christian communities in Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and Cyprus.

He wanted to show "what we have in common," he said. "And to create understanding, trust, among the different communities in the same diocese."

"In the beginning, it was very difficult. But once we have been transparent, I felt that all the community was very supportive and so we could overcome all our problems and turn the page finally," he said.

Pizzaballa was born in Cologno al Serio, Bergamo, Italy, on April 21, 1965. He joined the Franciscans in 1984, making his solemn profession in 1989. He was ordained to the priesthood on September 15, 1990. A month later, he moved to the Holy Land, studying biblical theology at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem.

He served as Vicar of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem for the pastoral care of Hebrew-speaking Catholics in Israel. He oversaw the publication of the Roman Missal in Hebrew in 1995.

He was Custos of the Holy Land -- the major superior of the Friars Minor in the Middle East -- from 2004 to 2016. He was appointed apostolic administrator sede vacante of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem on June 24, 2016.

One of Pizzaballa's most pressing challenges as Latin Patriarch will be to help Latin Catholics in the Holy Land to weather the coronavirus crisis, which has had a severe economic impact on the community.

The Latin Patriarchate welcomed the news of Pizzaballa's appointment.

"With feelings of joy and gratitude, the family of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, Amman, Nazareth, and Cyprus, in particular the bishops, patriarchal vicars, priests, deacons, seminarians, religious men and women, consecrated men and women, the People of God in all the parishes as well as the workers in the diocesan institutions, congratulates the new Patriarch wishing His Beatitude success in carrying out his exceptional responsibilities, especially in these unusual circumstances," the patriarchate said in an Oct. 24. statement.

"May His Beatitude be granted good health and divine blessing to continue serving our Local Church, while promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation."

Source: [Catholic News Agency](#).