

# Pope appoints new ambassador to U.S.

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) Pope Benedict XVI has named Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano as the Vatican's next ambassador to the United States.

The widely expected appointment was announced on Wednesday (Oct. 19).

Vigano, 70, has served since July 2009 as the No. 2 official at the Governorate of Vatican City State, which oversees the 108-acre sovereign territory with 1,900 employees and an annual budget of \$350 million.

Known as an effective manager and cost-cutter, Vigano has also been a controversial figure within church circles, and was reportedly the subject of anonymous messages criticizing and praising his record to high Vatican officials.

A career diplomat except for his recent stint in Vatican City, Vigano has served in the Vatican's embassies to Iraq and Great Britain, and as the Vatican's representative to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France. He was ambassador to Nigeria from 1992 to 1998.

As ambassador to Washington, Vigano succeeds Archbishop Pietro Sambini, who died in July of complications from lung surgery at age 73.

Formally known as the apostolic nuncio, the Vatican's ambassador represents the Holy See to a foreign government, but also plays a central role in advising the pope on naming a country's new bishops.

Vigano will arrive in Washington shortly before a presidential election year that promises to underscore a number of church-state issues including same-sex marriage and the exemption of religious institutions from anti-discrimination laws.

In an interview with Catholic News Service on Wednesday, Vigano declined to comment on U.S. politics, except to note that the upcoming "election is important for the country and for the whole world."