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Pope Francis Accepts Resignation of Virgin Islands Bishop Herbert Bevard

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Virgin Islands Bishop Herbert Bevard

ST. THOMAS — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Virgin Islands Bishop Herbert Bevard, who had fallen ill several weeks ago, was hospitalized and later airlifted, and had been recovering in North Carolina after receiving medical care at mainland hospitals.

"Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of the Most Reverend Herbert A. Bevard, from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Saint Thomas in the Virgin Islands. At the same time, he has appointed the Metropolitan Archbishop, Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory of Washington as the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese," reads a statement issued this morning by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In a [letter](#) to the the St. Thomas Diocese, Bishop Bevard said, "I have loved serving the People of God; the Clergy, Religious, Laity and the entire Virgin Islands community in the Diocese of Saint Thomas and will treasure the fond memories that we share together. It is this same love and concern for them, recognizing my own limitations, that now compel me to make this request.

"I welcome and pledge my support to my successor in the hope that the Lord will bless his ministry among you. In the interim, the Holy Father has appointed the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Washington DC as the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Saint Thomas. Please, join me as I welcome the Archbishop and re-assure him of our unquestionable support. As you continue to pray for me and as I continue to pray for you, I take this opportunity to present to you my profound esteem."

After converting from Presbyterianism in 1964, Bevard was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1972. He was created monsignor in 2003 and was stationed in Philadelphia as episcopal vicar for the city's northern half prior to being named bishop of the Virgin Islands in 2008.

The Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands is comprised of the Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, and Water Island. The territory has a total population of 110,000 of which 30,000 are Catholic, estimates the Catholic Church.

The resignation and appointment were publicized in Washington, D.C. on September 18, 2020 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

The diocese was established in 1977. Bishops that have served the Virgin Islands include: Edward J. Harper (1977-1985); Sean Patrick O'Malley (1985-1992) who was elevated to Cardinal in 2006; Elliot G. Thomas (1993-1999); George Murry (1999-2007); and Bevard (2008-2020).