

## Vatican Announces Retirement of Bishop Dominic Dinh Mai Luong

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The Vatican on Sunday announced the retirement of Bishop Dominic Dinh Mai Luong, D.D. of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, effective January 2016. Father Steve Sallot, Vicar General, said in a statement: "We have been blessed to have Bishop Dominic and we congratulate him on his retirement and his service to the Lord for nearly 50 years as a faithful priest and bishop." The first and only Vietnamese American Bishop in the U.S., Dominic Dinh Mai Luong was born on December 20, 1940, in Minh Cuong – about fifty miles from Hanoi – in the Province of Bui Chu in North Vietnam. He is the second youngest of the 11 children of Dominic Mai Ngoc Vy and Maria Pham (Khuou). His father was an official primarily involved in real estate transactions. The family, devout Catholics, belonged to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish. Unfortunately, because of the dangerous political instability plaguing the country, the family was forced to move a number of times. Young Dominic received a quality elementary education from a French-Vietnamese school. He attended secondary school at Trung Linh where he and a number of other students comprised the junior Seminary of Ho Ngoc Can for the Diocese of Bui Chu. In 1956 Dominic's bishop sent him to the United States to continue his formation for the priesthood. Of course, this meant a long, difficult separation from his family and his country. He would not be able to return home until 1979. He was just 16 years old. After passing comprehensive studies testing by the State of New York, he studied for six years at the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary in Buffalo. After that, he went on to Saint Bernard's Major Seminary in Rochester, New York. Besides the expected studies in philosophy, scripture, and theology, he also took science classes during summer vacations. On May 21, 1966, Bishop James A. McNulty ordained Dominic Mai Luong to the priesthood for the Diocese of Da Nang at the Basilica of Our Lady of Victory in Lackawanna, New York. Of course, he was unable to return to his home diocese because of the war raging in Vietnam at that time. Following his ordination, Father Luong completed his formal science studies, adding to a bachelor in physics, master's degrees in biology and in psychology. He then returned to the junior seminary in Buffalo where he taught biology and also served as a chaplain to Saint Francis Hospital. For a time he also was associate pastor at Saint Louis Parish in Buffalo. Father Luong's experience as a Vietnamese trained for the priesthood in America providentially suited him to be a leader when, at the fall of South Vietnam, many refugees came to the United States. A large portion of them went to the New Orleans area where Archbishop worked to help resettle them. He persuaded Father Luong, whom he met visiting in a refugee camp, to move to New Orleans and become Director of the Archdiocesan Vietnamese Apostolate. He accepted and served in this capacity from 1976 to 1983, when he became the Founding Pastor of Mary, Queen of Vietnam Parish. On the national level, Father Luong served as the Director of the National Center for the Vietnamese Apostolate, As the U.S. Conference of Bishops' Director of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees, he traveled throughout the country assisting various Vietnamese immigrant groups. Because of this important work, Pope John Paul II honored him with the title of Monsignor. Although Vietnamese immigrants settled in many places around the country, another very large concentration made their home in Southern California, principally in Orange County. The Vatican was aware of this circumstance, and so, when Bishop Brown petitioned for a second auxiliary bishop to assist him in his growing diocese, Pope John Paul II, on April 25, 2003, appointed Monsignor Dominic Mai Luong Titular Bishop of Cebaredes and Auxiliary Bishop of Orange. He was to be the first native-born Vietnamese Roman Catholic Bishop in the United States. Bishop Brown welcomed him and in his formal statement to the media noted: "Not only is he a person with deep spirituality and dedicated heart, but he also

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possesses well-honed leadership skills that will be very useful in his ministry here.” For his part, Bishop-elect Luong acknowledged: “By calling me the first Vietnamese priest to the office of episcopacy, His Holiness in particular, and the Church in the United States in general, recognize the many contributions with which 400,000 Vietnamese Catholics, over 600 priests, and more than 500 religious have enriched the Church in the United States, especially in the area of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.” In the presence of Cardinal Roger Mahoney and Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Tod Brown ordained Bishop Dominic Mai Luong to the fullness of the priesthood on June 11, 2003, at Saint Columban Church in Garden Grove. Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes of New Orleans and Bishop Jaime Soto served as Principal Co-Consecrators. Among the many bishops in attendance were two from Vietnam: the Bishop of Thai Binh and the Bishop of My Tho. A very special guest was Bishop Luong’s older brother, Father Dominic Mai Loi, who had arrived just in time after an exhausting flight from Vietnam. In an article written for the Orange County Catholic, retired Bishop Norman McFarland observed: “ This is a happening of major historical significance and brings the greatest joy to all...It recognizes the enormous growth of the Church in Orange County in its brief life span, calling for additional assistance on the hierarchical level, and it speaks no less graphically of the role of the Vietnamese community as a burgeoning and integral part of the local Church.”

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