

U.S. archbishop named as doctrinal guardian: Levada assumes Pope Benedict's former post

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Pope Benedict XVI has named the archbishop of San Francisco, William Levada, to the pope's old job as guardian of the Catholic faith, making Levada the highest-ranking American ever to serve at the Vatican.

Levada, 68, was named May 13 prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a powerful post that Benedict himself held for nearly a quarter-century until his election as pope on April 19. The new theology czar has had a long friendship with the pope from the time (1976-1982) when Levada was a staffer at the doctrinal office.

Church observers say the choice of Levada—doctrinally conservative, a veteran of church bureaucracy and versed in the 21st-century social trends confronting the church—is a clear sign that Benedict intends to steer a traditional course while also engaging the world.

Levada, who was archbishop of the Portland (Oregon) archdiocese before moving to the San Francisco archdiocese in 1995, at times has shown a pragmatic streak. "Archbishop Levada is conservative in his approach to theological issues, but he seems to take care to explain his own positions carefully and without rancor," said Richard McBrien of the University of Notre Dame. *-Religion News Service*