

Prague, Feb (CTK) - Dominik Duka who was appointed new Prague Archbishop on Saturday will take over the archdiocese on April 10, he agreed with Cardinal Miloslav Vlk whom he will replace in the post today.

The solemn mass will be held at Prague's St. Vitus's Cathedral in the presence of priests and the public at 10:00.

Vlk handed in his resignation in 2007 when he turned 75 as is usual in the church. Pope Benedict XVI did not accept his resignation and asked him to continue in the post for another two years that expired last May.

In his meeting with Vlk today Duka placed emphasis on the continuity of development in the archdiocese, the Prague Archbishopric told CTK.

"He pointed to the principle that is stressed in the preparation of students of theology for priesthood: not to change anything for a certain period," Prague Archbishopric spokesman Ales Pistora said.

Duka, who took over the key to the Archbishop's Palace, a collection of legal norms and a catalogue of the archdiocese, dined with Vlk.

"During the dinner they spoke about the tasks of the Prague Archbishop in general as well as about the tasks that will face the new Prague Archbishop in the foreseeable future," Pistora said.

"Archbishop Dominik Duka asked Cardinal Vlk to fulfil these tasks as the archdiocese administrator until he ceremoniously takes over the diocese," Pistora said.

He said Duka asked Vlk to be available for pastoral cooperation in the archdiocese. Duka will go to the Vatican on June 29, the SS Peter and Paul holiday, to take over pallium, a special part of the Metropolitan's clothing, from the Pope.

President Vaclav Klaus, who received Duka today, said he believes Duka's appointment will benefit the Czech Republic as well as the church.

Duka said he wants to serve society and that he would like to contribute to people living "like at Christmas time" the year around.

Klaus congratulated Duka on his new post and pointed out that this is their first meeting.

Duka told journalists after the meeting that he believes in good neighbourly relations. He hinted to that the Archbishop's Palace is situated next to Prague Castle, seat of Czech heads of state.

Duka is close to Klaus. They used to meet regularly before Christmas at the presidential seat at Prague Castle.

They also attended together the traditional ascent of Snezka, the Czech Republic's highest mountain (1602 metres above sea level) in the Krkonose (Giant) mountains, east Bohemia, on the occasion of the St Lawrence pilgrimage.

Duka told journalists that he had talked with Klaus several times about relations between the church and state.

The dispute over the ownership of St. Vitus's Cathedral was not taken up today, Duka said.

"It is still too early, I do not yet know all details of the issue. But I will try for all citizens of the Czech Republic to know that the cathedral is in a way our cathedral, I mean a Czech cathedral," Duka said.

He said it is not only a church, but it is also a pantheon of the kings of Bohemia who wanted the church to serve a spiritual revival of the nation.

The state and the church have long been locked in a dispute over the cathedral's ownership. Last March the Supreme Court dismissed an appellate review filed by the church.

The church complained against a lower court's verdict that the cathedral with the adjacent land belongs to the state. Last May the church filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court.

Duka said he would not yet talk about his plans in his new post, but said improving relations between the church and society is his priority.

Duka said the church should also seek a new way of communication with people.

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