

Pope names Vatican diplomat to lead scandal-struck Scottish archdiocese

Carol Glatz Catholic News Service | Jul. 24, 2013
Vatican City

Pope Francis appointed Msgr. Leo Cushley -- a longtime Vatican diplomat from the diocese of Motherwell -- to be the new archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Scotland.

The Vatican made the announcement Wednesday.

The native of Lanarkshire, Scotland, fills a post left vacant after Cardinal Keith O'Brien resigned in late February after admitting to sexual misconduct. Archbishop Peter Tartaglia of Glasgow acted as apostolic administrator of the archdiocese since the end of February.

"I know it's a delicate moment and that there is a lot to be done, but with God's grace and the kind support of the clergy and people of Edinburgh, I will work cheerfully and willingly with all the energy I can muster," Cushley said in a written statement.

"There are certain important questions that I will also have to familiarize myself with," but he said he could not yet "take stock of what has happened and see what can be done" before his ordination Sept. 21 in St. Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh.

"It is my sincere hope to do this always in truth and in charity, with a view to reconciliation and healing among the Catholics of Edinburgh. My first task is to preach the good news, Christ crucified and risen from the dead, to confirm my brother priests in their Catholic faith and ministry, and to be a loving, simple, wise shepherd to the flock that has been entrusted to me."

The archbishop-designate inherits an archdiocese that was rocked by news of sexual misconduct by O'Brien, who had led the archdiocese since 1985.

The cardinal stepped down Feb. 25 after the *Observer*, a British weekly national newspaper, carried a story detailing complaints of three priests and one former priest who alleged O'Brien made sexual advances toward them.

The cardinal initially denied the allegations but, less than a week later, issued a public apology for his actions. He did not attend the March conclave that elected Pope Francis because, he said, he did not want media attention to be on him rather than on the process of electing a new pope.

The cardinal, who is now 75, said he would "spend the rest of my life in retirement. I will play no further part in the public life of the Catholic Church in Scotland."

Cushley has served in the Vatican diplomatic corps since 1997 and has worked at the Vatican since 1993.

Serving first as an attache in the Vatican's Secretariat of State's English section, he completed his education in Rome at the Vatican's school for diplomats. He then worked at Vatican embassies in Burundi, Portugal, South Africa and Botswana. He also spent 2004 at the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York.

In 2009, he was assigned to his current position, once more at the Secretariat of State, but as head of the English-language section. In addition to being in charge of the writing and translation of important texts, the post also meant accompanying the pope to English-speaking countries. He accompanied Pope Benedict XVI to Malta, Cyprus and the United Kingdom in 2010.

In 2012, he was also named "prelate of the anticamera" of the apostolic palace -- a ceremonial post that includes assisting the pope when he receives high-profile visitors and heads of state.

He said his favorite hobbies are walking Scotland's hills, hiking Italy's mountains and jogging the streets of Rome, putting in six miles three times a week while listening to audio books. He loves watching golf but claims he is "completely rubbish" playing on the green.

His favorite music includes the Irish rock group U2 and operas by Mozart and Italian composers Giacomo Puccini and Giuseppe Verdi.

Born June 18, 1961, Cushley was ordained to the priesthood in 1985. He worked in the diocese of Motherwell from 1987 to 1993.

He has a doctorate in canon law and degrees in sacred liturgy, theology and philosophy from different pontifical universities in Rome.

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