

Dioceses of Nashville

Vatican /

Por: Elise Harris | Fuente: CNA

On Tuesday the Vatican announced Pope Francis' appointment of Fr. Shawn McKnight as the next bishop of the Diocese of Jefferson City, and Msgr. Mark Spalding as the new leader of the Diocese of Nashville.

In a Nov. 21 statement coinciding with the Vatican announcement, Fr. Michael Johnston, who until now has served as Apostolic Administrator for the Nashville diocese, voiced his gratitude to both Pope Francis for the appointment, and to Msgr. Spalding himself for his "generosity" in accepting the role.

Spalding, Johnston said, "is a man filled with enthusiasm and excitement" for his new responsibilities, and is someone who has "a strong work ethic, a deep love for the Lord and his people, and a great desire to lead and serve."

"He has already expressed such a keen interest in learning about the Diocese of Nashville, in listening to our needs and our hopes and dreams, and then discerning the direction the Holy Spirit wishes to take us," Johnston said. "With God's gift to him of this spirit of service and willingness to lead us, we are truly blessed."

Spalding, 52, who until now has served the Archdiocese of Louisville as Vicar General and pastor of Holy Trinity parish and Holy Name parish, was born Jan. 13, 1965, in Lebanon, Ky.

After graduating from Bethlehem High School Bardstown, he entered St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana and was ordained a priest Aug. 3, 1991, in the St. Joseph Proto-Cathedral of Bardstown.

Before his ordination, he studied from 1987-1991 at the American University in Louvain, Belgium, where he obtained a master degree in religious studies and a licentiate in canon law.

Since then, he has served at a number of parish assignments, including associate pastor at St. Joseph and chaplain at Bethlehem High School in Bardstown, associate pastor at St. Augustine in Lebanon, Ky., associate pastor at St. Margaret Mary in Louisville and pastor of Immaculate Conception in LaGrange.

Since 2011 he has served the Archdiocese of Louisville as Vicar General. His ordination and installation as Bishop of Nashville will take place Feb. 2, 2018, at Sagrado Corazon in the Catholic Pastoral Center on McGavock Pike.

In his comments on Msgr. Spalding's appointment, Johnston said Louisville would be losing a "fine priest," but offered his assurance that the bishop-elect would be "loved and cared for" as he begins his new role.

Fr. McKnight, who was born in Wichita, Kan. In 1968, got a degree in biochemistry from the University of Dallas before entering seminary in 1990.

He carried out his seminary studies at the Pontifical "Josephinum" College in Columbus, Ohio, and was ordained a priest May 28, 1994, for the Diocese of Wichita.

The bishop-elect then obtained a licentiate and doctorate degree in sacramental theology from the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome and published several articles on relevant pastoral and sacramental themes, finishing his studies in 2001.

After his ordination, he served the diocese in various pastoral, teaching and diocesan roles, the most recent being pastor of the Church of the Magdalen Parish in Wichita.

From 2000-2005, McKnight served as Director of diocesan Divine Worship and was a diocesan consultant and a member of the Presbyteral Council. From 2005-2010 he was a faculty member at Saint Meinrad Seminary working in the formation of permanent deacons.

After, from 2010-2015, the bishop-elect served as Executive Director of the USCCB's Office for Clergy and Consecrated Life. In 2015, he was assigned to the Church of the Magdalen parish, where he has served until now.