News



Bishop John Gaydos of Jefferson City, Mo., applauds as Fr. Shawn McKnight, a priest of the Diocese of Wichita, Kan., speaks during a Nov. 21 news conference in Jefferson City after Pope Francis named the priest the new bishop of Jefferson City. (CNS/Jay Nies, The Catholic Missourian)

by Catholic News Service

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Pope Francis has named Fr. Mark Spalding, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, as the new bishop of Nashville, Tennessee, succeeding Bishop David Choby, who died June 3.

The pope also accepted the resignation of Bishop John Gaydos of Jefferson City, Missouri, and named as his successor Fr. Shawn McKnight, a priest of the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas.

McKnight was executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations from 2010-2015.

The appointments were announced in Washington Nov. 21 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Spalding, 52, is vicar general of the Louisville Archdiocese and also pastor of two parishes, Holy Trinity and Holy Name.

McKnight, 49, is currently pastor of the Church of the Magdalen in Wichita. He also has been a chaplain at Newman University, also in Wichita.

In an interview with The Record, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Spalding welcomed the appointment, noting, "It's amazing how God works and uses a humble instrument to build up his church."

"God has always worked in my life," he said. "Sometimes I didn't understand how God was working, but in time I did see his hand guiding me, leading, encouraging, challenging me to be more in the world. I feel like this is one more occasion for God to work in and through me."

In a statement about his appointment, Spalding said: "As one whose faith and vocation was nurtured in the 'Kentucky Holy Land' in one of the oldest dioceses in the United States, I appreciate the deep legacy of Catholicism in the Diocese of Nashville, the first diocese established in the state of Tennessee and the second oldest diocese in the province of Louisville."

"I am honored to participate in this legacy and to continuing the ministry of Bishop David Choby, whose joyful and humble pastoral leadership graced this diocese for

the past decade," he said. "I also extend deep thanks to Fr. Michael Johnston, who has administered the diocese since Bishop Choby's death in June of this year."

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Both Louisville Archbishop Joseph Kurtz and Fr. Johnston, in separate statements, praised the appointment of Choby's successor. The archbishop said the newly named bishop "brings a wealth of pastoral and administrative experience, a keen intellect, wise judgment, leadership ability and pastoral zeal" to the Tennessee diocese.

"Archbishop Kurtz and the people of the Archdiocese of Louisville are undergoing the loss of such a fine priest, and we are grateful for their sacrifice," said Johnston. "We assure them that our new bishop will be loved and cared for as he begins his new ministry among us."

Wichita Bishop Carl Kemme in a statement welcomed the episcopal appointment for McKnight.

"We thank our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for choosing yet another of our worthy priests to serve as a bishop in the church," he said. "We receive this appointment as a great honor for our diocese and our priests.

"May God shower his blessings upon Fr. McKnight as he now prepares for his episcopal ordination, and may God continue to bless the Diocese of Wichita with excellent priests to serve our diocese and beyond," the bishop added.



Bishop-designate J. Mark Spalding, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, displays a Tennessee Titans cap during a news conference Nov. 21 after being named bishop of Nashville, Tenn. Spalding succeeds Bishop David Choby, who died June 3. (CNS/Theresa Laurence, Tennessee Register)

Born Jan. 13, 1965, Spalding is a native of Fredericktown, Kentucky, and grew up in Holy Trinity Parish there. He is the eldest of three children raised on the family farm. His childhood, he said, was marked by hard farm work and was centered on family and faith.

He attended St. Meinrad College Seminary in St. Meinrad, Indiana, where he studied philosophy. In 1991, he attended the American College at Louvain in Belgium, where he earned a degree in theology. He later attended the Catholic University of Louvain, where he earned a licentiate of canon law in 1992.

Ordained Aug. 3, 1991, he has been vicar general of the Louisville Archdiocese since 2011.

Born June 26, 1968, McKnight is the oldest of eight siblings. He holds a bachelor of science degree in biochemistry from the University of Dallas, master of arts and master of theology degrees from the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, and licentiate and doctoral degrees in theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm, in Rome.

Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wichita in 1994, he has taught graduate studies at the Pontifical College Josephinum from 2003 to 2008, where he also served as director of liturgy, dean of students, director of formation in the school of theology, and vice president for development and alumni relations.

He served as chaplain at Newman University in Wichita from 2000 to 2001, where at the same time he was an adjunct professor of theology and visiting scholar at the university's Bishop Gerber Institute of Catholic Studies.

He has been pastor of the Church of the Magdalen since 2015.

Bishop Gaydos was appointed bishop of Jefferson City by St. John Paul II. He was ordained as the third bishop of Jefferson City Aug. 27, 1997.

On the national level, he is a former chairman of what is now
the USCCB's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. He turns 75 next August; canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation at age 75.