News
Vatican



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Vatican City — July 18, 2019
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Pope Francis has named a new director of the Vatican press office, tasking a British-Italian staffer of the office to take over leadership in a permanent capacity seven months after the surprise resignations of its former director and vice director.

Matteo Bruni, who has worked for the press office for a decade and has handled the complex logistics for press involvement on papal trips abroad for the past six years, will officially start as director July 22.

Bruni replaces Italian Alessandro Gisotti, who had been clear about only wishing to serve in an interim capacity after the unexpected departures of Greg Burke and Paloma García Ovejero.

Gisotti, who has been widely praised for his professional and courteous direction of the press office, will take up a new role as one of two deputies in charge of helping Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli coordinate the editorial line of the Vatican's various media outlets.



Matteo Bruni is seen during the papal trip to Bulgaria in 2019. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

The change in leadership had been anticipated for some time, with Bruni generally expected to take up the director role. Italian-language news reports have indicated that the Vatican wished to announce his appointment at the same time as a new vice director for the press office, but that at least two laywomen have turned down the job.

In an interview after announcement of his appointment with the city-state's web-portal Vatican News, Bruni highlighted the importance of transparent communication and said he will endeavor "to contribute to making the Press Office a better point of reference for journalists who are sharing the story of the pope and the Holy See with the whole world."

Paolo Ruffini, who will oversee Bruni as the prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications, said in a statement that the pope had chosen as press office director someone "who knows the machine perfectly."

Ruffini said that Bruni knows how to guide the press office "with competence, wisdom, foresight, and a team spirit."

Burke, an American, and García Ovejero, a Spaniard, left their roles at the press office with little warning on New Year's Eve, in a move that appeared to indicate sharp tensions at the top of the Vatican's complicated communications structure.

Although neither of the former officials have given clear reasons for their resignations, they came shortly after Tornielli's Dec. 18 appointment as editorial director for the communications dicastery. The two are also known to have wanted more resources, especially staff, at the press office.

Ruffini created four new roles at the office shortly after Burke and García Ovejero's departure, naming a senior advisor to the director, two assistants to the director, and a new office manager.

Bruni first joined the press office in 2009 under then-director Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi. He took on main responsibility for handling press involvement on papal trips in 2013, traveling months in advance of the pope to scout event locations and work with local organizers.

He had handled those responsibilities for 31 papal visits abroad, starting with retired Pope Benedict XVI's final sojourn as pontiff, to Lebanon in September 2012.

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Bruni, who is married and has one child, was born in Britain to a Dutch father and an Italian mother, and holds both British and Italian citizenship. Beyond English and

Italian, he also speaks Spanish and French.

Bruni's appointment comes just a few days after Burke announced that he would be moving from Rome to Barcelona to take up a new job as communications director for the University of Navarra's IESE Business School.

García Ovejero has returned to her former outlet, Spanish radio station Cadena COPE, and is serving now as its correspondent for the UK and Ireland.

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