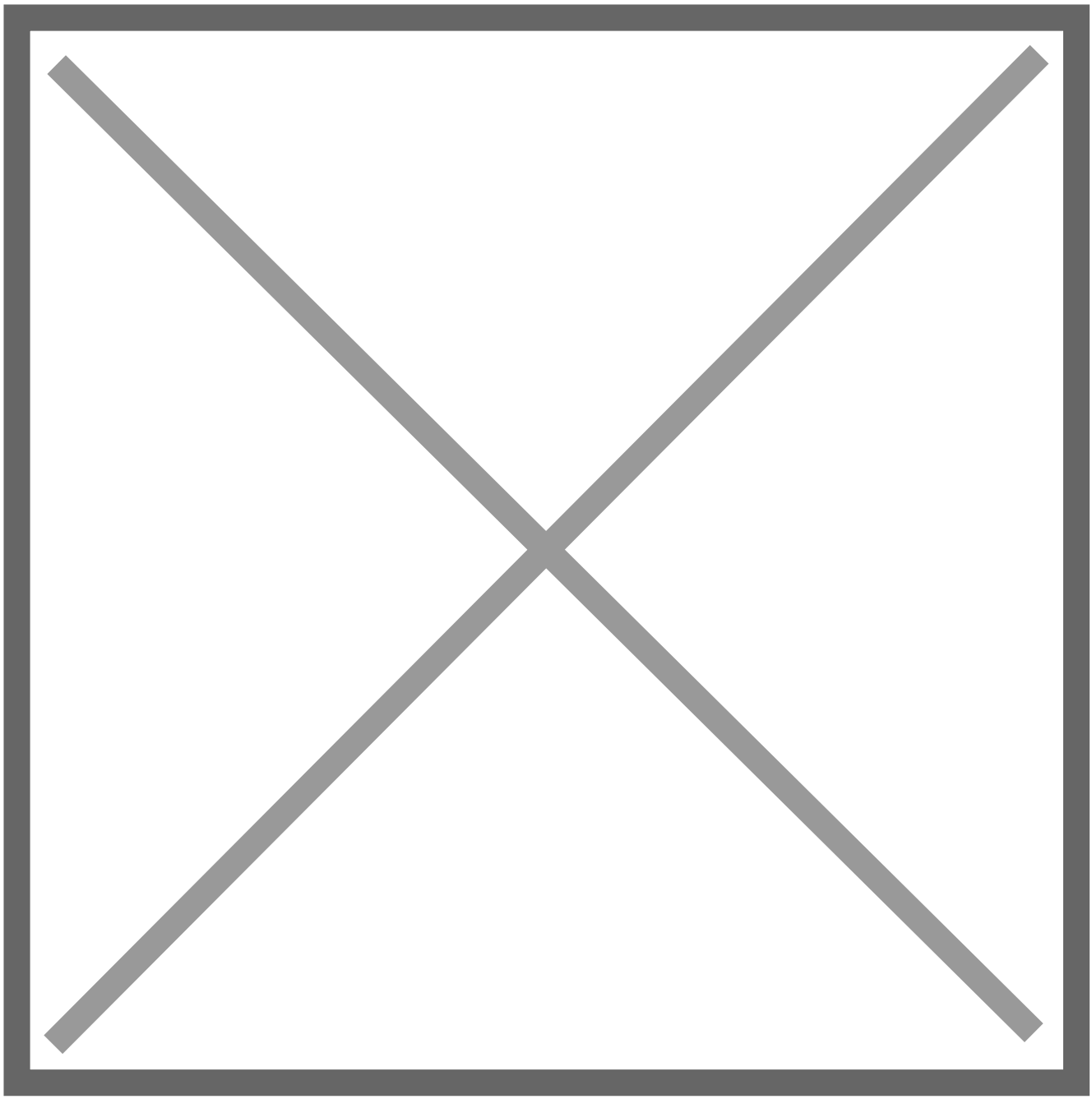
News



Msgr. Kieran E. Harrington, vicar of communications for the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., addresses the audience during the diocese's annual Christmas tree-lighting ceremony Dec. 5, 2019, at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn. Harrington was announced April 14, 2021, as the new national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, succeeding Oblate Fr. Andrew Small. (CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)



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Msgr. Kieran Harrington, vicar of communications for the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, has been named national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States.

The five-year appointment was announced April 14 by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which oversees the work of more than 120 national mission societies around the world.

Harrington succeeds Oblate Fr. Andrew Small, who is completing his second five-year term as the national director of the four organizations that make up the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States.

"I am humbled by the trust placed in me to serve the church in this most important area of missionary evangelization," said Harrington, who added that he looks forward to "working with the bishops and dioceses to support the pastoral work of the pontifical missions."

Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio said in a statement the selection of Harrington for this position "is the absolute right choice." He noted that there has "always been an extraordinary desire within him to bring the good news of Jesus Christ, and the Christian faith, to the people not only of his parish, but throughout the world."

He said the priest brings to the role a "deep faith and motivation to evangelize" and that the church will benefit because of his "devotion to Our Lord, and to the people the Catholic Church is called to serve."

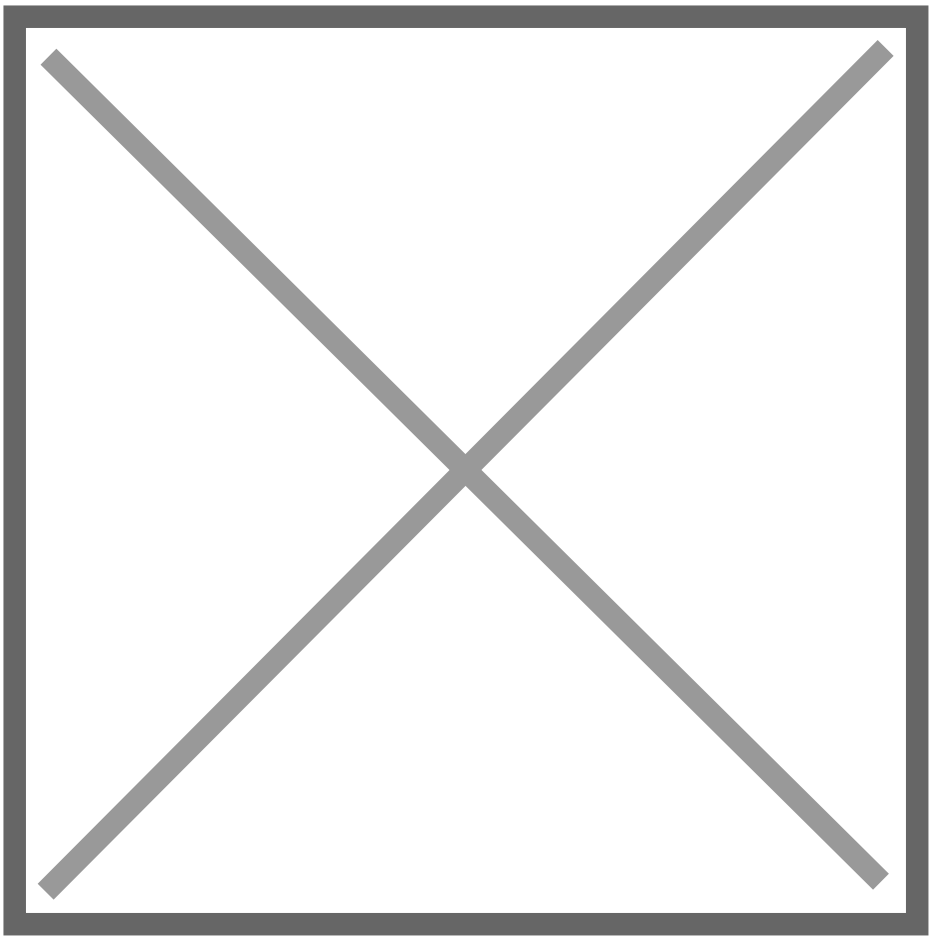
On July 1, Small will officially continue his work as president and CEO of Missio Invest, a group he founded in 2014 to help fund the social service efforts of the Catholic Church in Africa through Missio Invest Social Impact Fund.

He said he has gotten to know Harrington in the past 10 years and is "delighted that someone of such ability and passion has been chosen as the next national director of the Holy Father's mission societies."

Harrington was ordained in 2001 and has been vicar of communications for the Diocese of Brooklyn since 2006.

As vicar, he has been responsible for overseeing the diocesan public information and affairs office and its government affairs and public policy office as well as supervising NET, the diocese's cable station, and The Tablet, the diocesan newspaper. The priest also is rector of the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph in Brooklyn.

He told Catholic News Service April 13 he was very grateful for the opportunity "to be involved in this important ministry in the life of the church" noting that the "missionary impulse" is at the heart of the baptismal call for all Catholics and that the Pontifical Mission Societies aims to "awaken that missionary spirit."



Oblate Fr. Andrew Small, director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, speaks at a conference at the Vatican Nov. 5, 2015. Small is completing his tenure as director of the organization and on April 14, 2021, Msgr. Kieran E. Harrington of the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., was announced as his successor. (CNS/Paul Haring)

His own sense of the missionary role of the church goes back to when he was young and his Irish immigrant parents in New York had visiting Irish Holy Ghost Fathers come to the house, where they would celebrate Mass and take up a collection for the church in Biafra, which at the time was a secessionist state in West Africa and today is part of Nigeria.

He said these priests made a big impression on him just by their "essence of missionary spirit."

And now, as he prepares to follow a missionary outreach, Harrington said he hopes to be able to discuss with the nation's bishops and diocesan directors of the

Pontifical Mission Societies the best ways to continue to tell the story of the church's outreach around the world.

"Amazing things are being done," he said, noting the church's mission work is not just about humanitarian projects but also about communicating the faith.

A key part of continuing this work, he added, is to help Catholics in developing nations or struggling areas to know "they are not alone: The whole church is praying with them, walking with them."

Small similarly stressed the church's mission work was one of solidarity with the church around the world and said the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies has done just that from its founding in 1916 to now.

"It is as important as ever to lift the voices no one has access to ... the church no one sees," he told CNS.

And over the years, the Pontifical Mission Societies has found new ways to communicate its message, from the television work of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen — who was its national director from 1950 to 1966 and is a sainthood candidate who has been declared "Venerable" — to the digital outreach under Small's direction.

The Oblate priest has overseen the group's online curriculum in mission theology and its creation of the Missio USA "MassBot" which enabled users to request the offering of a Mass for their intentions and receive messages from the missionary priest who celebrated the Mass as well as online updates of global missionary work.

Small said in his 10 years with Pontifical Mission Societies, the organization focused on new ways to communicate the Gospel message by hiring people with backgrounds in youth and young adult ministries and also by providing more bilingual materials.

He is particularly proud of the work of Missio Invest, initially formed under the umbrella of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States until it became separately incorporated in 2018.

He said the group pursues the same goals as the pope's missionary groups but in different ways which he said was like "the new kid on the missionary block."

Missio Invest has already provided 40 loans of $4.5 million to agriculture, businesses, schools and microfinance institutions owned and operated by the Catholic Church in several African countries.

The Pontifical Mission Societies includes the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Holy Childhood Association, the Society of St. Peter Apostle, and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.

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