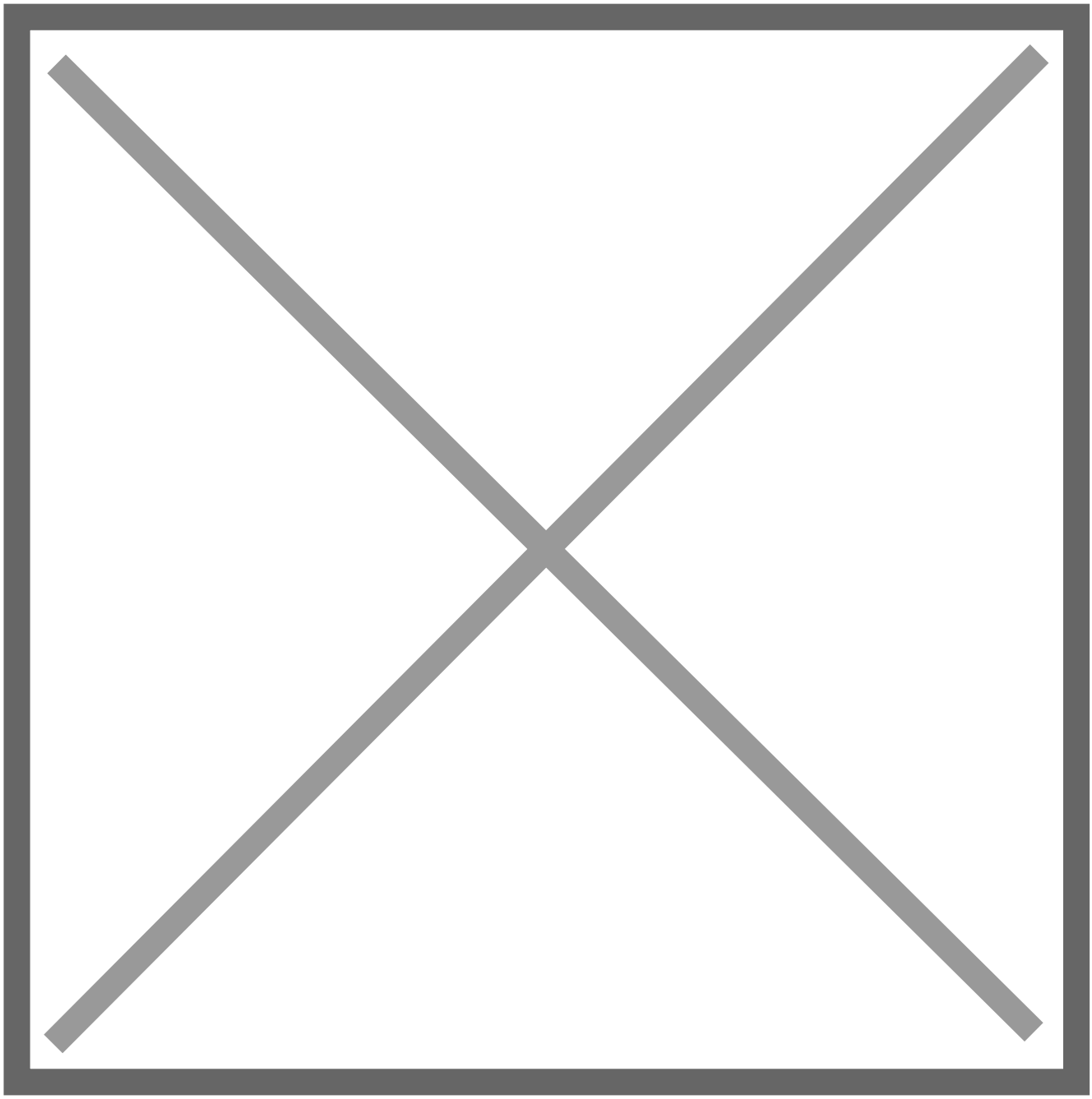
News
Vatican



Pope Francis leads his general audience in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican June 16, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Pope Francis has named Oblate Fr. Andrew Small secretary "pro tempore" of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Small, 53, had served two terms as national director for the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, and his successor there was named in April.

The Vatican June 22 announced Small's appointment to the commission, which Pope Francis established in 2014. The body of experts, with input from survivors, is meant to make proposals and spearhead initiatives to improve safeguarding norms and procedures throughout the church. Its work is separate from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's investigation and canonical prosecution of clerics accused of abuse.

Small, who was born in Liverpool, England, but worked in the United States for many years and holds U.S. citizenship, succeeds Msgr. Robert Oliver, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston.

The commission is headed by Boston Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley; when Oliver's departure was announced in March, Terrence Donilon, secretary for communications at the archdiocese said O'Malley "is working with the Council of Cardinals to create a new structure, which includes establishing it as a new office within the Holy See."

The new structure is expected to be part of the pope's reorganization of the Roman Curia, which should be announced in the fall and explains why Small's appointment as secretary of the commission is "pro tempore," literally "for the time being."

Small told CNS his first task at the commission will be to listen to the staff, commission members and abuse survivors.

While the work is different from the missionary focus he has had the past 10 years, he said, safeguarding can never be "an area of concern off by itself. It's about mainstreaming it; being missionary in child protection and safeguarding if you will."

"It's my belief that with something as important as the protection of minors and safeguarding policies, there are small and big ways to move the ball forward, especially in institutional systems like the church," he said. "Being able to celebrate Mass in hundreds of languages and cultures every Sunday means we are able to provide safeguarding and education in those places, too."

Promoting effective safeguarding policies is not a new task for Small, he said, citing work he has done both with the Pontifical Mission Societies and with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"With commission member Teresa Kettelkamp, we developed safeguarding awareness criteria for all applicants for one of the grant programs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops which was modified and adopted across all international grant programs of the USCCB," he said.

"We did the same with the Pontifical Mission Societies online digital platform missio.org, something which was also adopted by the Vatican and is now applied to all grant applicants from mission dioceses," Small said. "For sure, these efforts are not enough in themselves, but I think it's important to put safeguarding in whatever avenue or moment you have access to."

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Born April 20, 1968, Small entered the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Dublin in 1989. He studied philosophy and theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and then at Milltown Institute in Dublin before his ordination in Liverpool in 1999.

He holds law degrees from Sheffield University in England and Georgetown University Law Center, where he was an adjunct professor of international law. He also holds a doctorate in systematic theology from The Catholic University of

America in Washington.

Small joined the USCCB in 2004 as a policy adviser on international economic development and later became director of the U.S. bishops' Office for the Church in Latin America. Before that he worked in pastoral ministry in Houston and in Rio de Janeiro.