News



Lewis Hall on the Seton Hall University campus in South Orange, N.J. (CNS/courtesy ICSST)

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A Catholic university in northern New Jersey has named a new president after its previous head abruptly left and sued the school.

Seton Hall University announced April 2 that Msgr. Joseph R. Reilly has been appointed as its 22nd president.

Reilly, who will take over from interim president Katia Passerini July 1, has most recently served as Seton Hall's vice provost for academics and Catholic identity.

Passerini, set to return to her role as provost and executive vice president, was appointed in July 2023 following the sudden departure of former Seton Hall president Joseph Nyre.

In February, Nyre and his wife, Kelli, filed suit against the school, claiming the former chairman of the university's board of regents, Kevin H. Marino, had harassed and intimidated them. In December 2022, Nyre and Marino issued a joint email to the university community advising that an independent review had found "a small number of trusted, long-time employees of Seton Hall Law" had over several years "misappropriated funds of the school in excess of $975,000."

In a February statement, Laurie A. Pine, a Seton Hall spokeswoman, said, "The claims in this filing are completely without merit, and we intend to vigorously contest them."

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, chair of Seton Hall's board of trustees and president of its board of regents, hailed the news of Reilly's appointment.

"In my service with Monsignor Reilly on the Board of Trustees, he impressed me with his abiding faith, keen intellect and genuine care for the entire University," said the cardinal in the university's announcement. "I am confident he will be an outstanding president."

Reilly said he was "profoundly grateful and exceedingly energized" to be Seton Hall's 22nd president. "Seton Hall is the place where I have come to know the truth about God, about who I am before God, and about what contribution to society that God is inviting me to make," he said in a statement. "I cannot wait to engage our community as together we strive to bring new life to the timeless Catholic mission that makes Seton Hall unique among American universities."

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A New Jersey native, Reilly attended Seton Hall Preparatory School and graduated from Seton Hall University in 1987 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Newark in 1991 and returned to his alma mater in 2002 as rector of the College Seminary at St. Andrew's Hall.

From 2012 to 2022, Reilly served as rector and dean of the university's Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology, and then undertook a yearlong sabbatical before becoming a vice provost.

Along with his extensive experience at Seton Hall, Reilly has played what the university called "key roles in multiple pontificates."

He was named a monsignor by St. John Paul II in 2005 and appointed by Pope Francis in 2015 as a Missionary of Mercy.

Reilly has served on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Faithful Citizenship Strategy Committee and Catholic Social Teaching Task Force.

He received his bachelor of sacred theology degree from Pontifical Gregorian University and his licentiate in sacred theology from Pontificio Istituto di Spiritualità (also known as the Teresianum), both in Rome; and his doctorate in educational administration from Fordham University in New York.

Founded in 1856 and named after St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first U.S.-born saint, Seton Hall University is one of the nation's oldest diocesan universities. The school counts more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers more than 90 academic majors.