News

Bishop Richard Moth of Arundel and Brighton, England

Bishop Richard Moth of Arundel and Brighton, England, is pictured in an undated photo. On Dec. 19, 2025, Pope Leo XIV appointed Moth the new leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. (OSV News/Marcin Mazur, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales)

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An avid horseback-riding Pope Leo XIV has appointed a bishop who shares his passion as the new leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Bishop Richard Moth of Arundel and Brighton was named Dec. 19 as the 12th archbishop of Westminster.

He succeeds Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the president of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, who has held the office since 2009 and who turned 80 in November.

Zambia-born Moth, 67, will be installed in Westminster Cathedral on Feb. 14.

"I am moved greatly by the trust that Pope Leo has placed in me," Moth said in a Dec. 19 statement.

He said: "My first task will be to get to know the priests and people of Westminster and I look forward, now, to serving them.

"With them, and building on the firm foundations that have been laid by so many down the years, I look forward to continuing the great adventure that is the life of the Church and witness to the Gospel," he added.

Nichols said in the same press release that he was "delighted" by the appointment, saying his successor will bring "many gifts and considerable episcopal experience from his years of ministry."

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Moth was born in Zambia's Chingola but brought up in Kent, south east England, and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Southwark in July 1982.

He studied canon law at St. Paul University, Ottawa, Ontario, before moving back to south London to serve in parishes and also as chaplain of the Territorial Army, the British military reservists.

He served as private secretary to Archbishop Michael Bowen of Southwark from 1992 until 2001, when he was also president of the Interdiocesan Tribunal of Second Instance of Southwark and the archdiocese's vocations director. In 2001, he was appointed vicar general and chancellor of the diocese.

He was ordained Bishop of the Forces in 2009 at Westminster Cathedral and in the following six years came to public attention by criticizing the failure of the British government to properly equip troops in Afghanistan and by warning Prime Minister David Cameron against attacking Libya.

Pope Francis appointed him bishop of Arundel and Brighton, on England's southern coast, in 2015 and he was made chair of the Department for Social Justice of the bishops' conference. In that capacity, Moth was severely critical of reports of the rationing of health care during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

When it emerged that doctors had been issued with orders against attempting to resuscitate patients with learning disabilities, he denounced the policy as "wholly unacceptable and immoral."

"It is shocking to hear that people with learning disabilities are being made the victims of such discrimination," he said.

The new Westminster archbishop is also chair of governors at St. Mary's University, London, and the bishops' liaison for prisons.

He has been an Oblate of the Benedictine Pluscarden Abbey, Scotland, for more than 40 years and is a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, making frequent trips to the Holy Land. He enjoys horse riding and walking.