News

Bishop-designate Godfrey Mullen speaks during a news conference at the Cathedral of St. Pet

Bishop-designate Godfrey Mullen speaks during a news conference at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill., March 13 after Pope Leo XIV appointed him as bishop of Belleville. Mullen is a Benedictine monk. (OSV News photo/Courtesy The Messenger/David Wilhelm)

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Pope Leo XIV has named Fr. Godfrey Mullen, a Benedictine monk, as the new bishop of Belleville, Illinois.

The Vatican announced the appointment of Bishop-designate Mullen March 13. The see of the Diocese of Belleville has been vacant since its former bishop, now-Archbishop Michael McGovern, was installed as archbishop of Omaha, Nebraska, in May 2025.

Mullen, 60, is a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana and current administrator of the Diocese of Belleville. A native of Illinois, he holds a doctorate in liturgical studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington.

"With great joy and gratitude, the Diocese welcomes the announcement of our new bishop-designate," it said in a statement posted on its website. "After months of prayer and anticipation, we give thanks to God for the shepherd who will soon lead our diocesan family."

Mullen's episcopal ordination and installation as Belleville's 10th bishop is scheduled for May 1.

"My sincere thanks to our brother from Illinois, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, for his confidence in calling me to shepherd this beautiful flock," Mullen said in a statement. "I accept this mission in the Church, this service to His people, as God's plan. ... I have accepted many assignments from Abbots and Bishops under whom I have served and have nearly always grown to love those assignments. I trust that pattern will continue."

McGovern said in a statement, "Each day I thank God for the ministry of Pope Leo XIV, who today has appointed Father Godfrey Mullen" as Belleville's next bishop.

"Father Godfrey's years of priestly ministry, prayerfulness, compassion, intelligence and humor will be great assets as he shepherds the people of southern Illinois into the future, a future filled with hope," the archbishop said. He asked everyone to join him in praying for "God's abundant blessings upon Mullen and the clergy and all the people of the Diocese of Belleville."

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago congratulated the Benedictine on his episcopal appointment.

"He has distinguished himself as a college professor, an able administrator and a proven pastor, serving the People of God and the Church with humility and devotion for more than 30 years," the cardinal said in a statement. "We are confident he will be a strong and compassionate leader for the Belleville diocese, and we look forward to working with him."

Mullen is native son of the Belleville Diocese, born Jan. 22, 1966, in Salem, Illinois. He studied at St. Meinrad College in Indiana where he received a bachelor's degree in history in 1988, a master's degree in theology in 1991 and a master of divinity in 1994. He earned his doctorate from Catholic University in 2003.

He made his solemn monastic profession with the Order of St. Benedict Aug. 15, 1992, and he was ordained to the priesthood June 5, 1994.

He is a former professor of liturgy at St. Meinrad College, has been rector of St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville, Indiana, and has been a parish pastor. In 2022, he was named rector of the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, a role he has continued while serving as diocesan administrator. Mullen has written several articles and books about liturgy.

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Since childhood, "I have always been fascinated by the way Christ is present in His wonderful people in Southern Illinois," Mullen said in his statement. "The past ten months have taken me to towns in Southern Illinois where I'd never been before and in every place, there have been warm welcomes and exquisitely visible, living faith. You all are my people. All my life, I have loved you."

He noted that on Pentecost Sunday in 2024, McGovern promulgated a pastoral plan "that called our local Church to attend to important priorities: youth and young adults, family life, faith formation, and vital parish life and ministry" and "looked for ways the Holy Spirit could revitalize and prosper our Diocese."

"The diocesan staff has heard from many about their hopes," Mullen said. "And my fundamental hope, after assuring the vibrancy of our central work of worshiping God in the Eucharist, is to welcome the power of the Holy Spirit again into our lives and into our parishes, so that instead of fearing our future, we might be passionately focused on how we, as joyful Disciples of our Savior Jesus, can build His Kingdom in this place and thrive to His glory and honor."

"To be disciples of Jesus means that we must be students and practitioners of hospitality, prayer, formation, and service every day," he said. "These four pillars of stewardship must mark our work as we walk the way with Christ. They are our surest appropriate response to all the good He has done for us. These are sturdy pillars upon which many parishes, communities, and schools have been built."

He said the diocese's 99 parishes "have been tremendously blessed with gifts beyond all telling," and he highlighted the diocese's ministries, finding Christ in all the Church serves — "the immigrant, the stranger, the incarcerated, the mentally ill,

the alienated, the hungry, the homeless, the elderly and the young."

He paid tribute to his own family, remembering his late parents and a sister, who is deceased, as well as his living siblings, "who first shared the faith with me."

"To the monks of Saint Meinrad who have tolerated this extrovert in their midst these past 38 years and taught me the invaluable rhythm of prayer and work, thank you," he added.

St. Meinrad, in an announcement on his appointment, said that Mullen will be the third monk in its 172-year history to be named a bishop.

The newly named bishop also expressed gratitude to his brother priests, near and far, and to seminarians, deacons, women religious and the laity.

The Diocese of Belleville was established in 1887 and has a population of 860,000 people, 70,000 of whom are Catholic.