

# Longtime St. John's teacher, leader chosen as new abbot



The Rev. Douglas Mullin was elected as the new abbot of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville. He replaces Abbot John Klassen, who was elected in 2000 but retired in accordance with church law as he approached his 75th birthday this month. 🟡 Courtesy of St. John's Abbey via St. John's University

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St. John's Abbey, a Catholic monastery in central Minnesota, has a new leader.

The abbey monks elected the Rev. Douglas Mullin as their 11th abbot. Mullin succeeds Abbot John Klassen, who is stepping down just before he turns 75, the mandatory retirement age.

Mullin became a monk in 1992, and was ordained a priest in 2007. Most recently, he served as chaplain at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

He previously served as an educator and in leadership roles at St. John's University, including chair of the education department, and dean of students at St. John's preparatory school.

"I'm deeply humbled and grateful that among all the bright, talented, faith filled members of our community, my brother monks have chosen to call me to serve as your abbot," Mullin said Tuesday during a thanksgiving service following the election.

A blessing of the new abbot is planned for Jan. 28 in the Abbey and University Church at St. John's.

Klassen led the abbey for 23 years. He is credited with increasing transparency and accountability during the monastery's [reckoning](#) of sexual abuse by monks.

The monastery says there are credible claims against 21 monks. Fourteen are deceased, and two have been dispensed from their religious vows and are no longer connected to the abbey. One is living in a nursing care facility, and four are living at the abbey under supervision.

Mullin is not named on that list. But he was named in court documents filed by the abbey in 2016. That year, the abbey filed seven lawsuits in district court that had been served, but never filed, by plaintiffs' attorneys shortly before a window for filing sexual abuse claims created by the Minnesota Child Victims Act closed.

One of the complaints alleged Mullin had "unpermitted sexual contact" with a minor in 1993, when he was dean of students at St. John's prep school. Mullin adamantly denied the allegation.

The abbey said it filed the complaint at Mullin's request "to restore his good name." The lawsuit was dismissed in 2017.