

Pope taps diplomat as new ‘prime minister’

News in the [October 2, 2013](#) issue

Ahead of a major diplomatic push to prevent a U.S.-led attack on Syria, Pope Francis has named a veteran Vatican diplomat as his secretary of state, the first major appointment of his six-month-old papacy.

Francis on August 31 named Archbishop Pietro Parolin as the Vatican’s no. 2 official, a role that is often described as the Vatican’s “prime minister.”

Parolin will replace Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, a trusted aide of pope emeritus Benedict XVI, whose lack of diplomatic training had been blamed for the mismanagement and scandals that plagued the Vatican in recent years.

Parolin, a 58-year-old Italian, is a veteran of the Vatican’s diplomatic corps and will take office on October 15.

He is currently the Holy See’s ambassador to Venezuela and served in the past as the undersecretary for relations with states, a role similar to deputy foreign minister. “I feel the full weight of the responsibility placed upon me: this call entrusts to me a difficult and challenging mission,” he said in a statement after his appointment.

In his new role, Parolin will oversee the Roman Curia, the Catholic Church’s central administration, which was accused of corruption and inefficiency during the February conclave that led to Francis’s election.

The role of secretary of state not only entails managing the church’s central bureaucracy but also coordinating the Vatican’s relationship with states and with bishops around the world. —RNS