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Companions on the Journey

September 1, 2019

Dear Friends,

This month will mark eight years since our Archbishop was assigned here to Philadelphia. Charles Chaput has served here through tumultuous times. He was sent here to try to bring order to our local Church after two very damning Grand Jury reports on the abuse of minors by priests and also the mishandling of too many of those cases by the bishops who were in positions of authority during those years. Archbishop Chaput was viewed as a strong and orthodox bishop with the necessary moxie and experience to make good decisions. I speak of this because later this month the Archbishop will turn 75 years old and in the Code of Canon Law any bishop or any priest who reaches that age and is still in active ministry must write his letter of resignation from the position to which he has been assigned. This includes Archbishops. Archbishop Chaput has already sent his letter to Pope Francis. You are asked to do so six months before the actual date.

(An aside: My 75th birthday is approaching in a couple of years. In 2022 I will reach that milestone God willing. . I believe that I would ask for an additional year to serve as pastor of Saint Anthony's because I would be 49 years ordained and I would like to stay around to celebrate my fiftieth anniversary and then ride gently into the sunset. Whether that scenario develops we will have to wait and see. But at least you have an opportunity to know my thinking.)

Archbishop Chaput found that there were serious financial problems that existed in the Archdiocese when he arrived. I do not believe he was told about these issues and perhaps they were not known. He has had to make major course corrections and sell off major diocesan assets and enter into long term lease agreements for other Church assets in order to get sufficient funds to make whole those accounts that had been given IOU's but were short on actual cash. To his credit he has done what he was tasked to do and now the Diocese is on an even keel financially although our assets are vastly reduced or in some instances entirely gone.

I believe he has served us well as Archbishop although others find him a bit too blunt and not easily approachable. It is difficult to be all things to all people. But of the bishops I have served under I can honestly say that for the first time in my life as a priest, in most instances the way he saw things was the same way I saw things. That had not happened before. I am grateful for his leadership and I am happy to have served with him five years as a Dean in our Deanery and five years on the Council of Priests as Chairperson. He has been most helpful and straightforward with me in all my dealing with him. I have no idea who his successor will be or when that will be announced. Neither does he. But please pray for the right bishop. It will make a great deal of difference.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry

