

Companions on the Journey

December 15, 2019

Dear Friends,

A few weeks back I was informed by a couple of our parishioners that Father Joseph Smits CICM who had served here on weekends for over thirty-five years and who retired about four years ago was about to turn 90 years old. I was asked if we could put Father's address at his community's Retirement Home down in Arlington, Virginia in our Bulletin so that parishioners might send him a birthday card on this significant birthday in his life. We sent word to Saint Catherine's in Horsham also and to Saint Alphonsus as well because Father Smits had also served in those parishes too while he was stationed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

This morning I received an email from Father Smits. It is as follows:

Dear Stephen,

Some two weeks ago I received a few B-day cards from Ambler. The cards kept coming over 200. One lady wrote that there was an announcement in the parish paper. It is humbling and encouraging to read these cards. Very many of them mentioned homilies. I did not realize the spiritual hunger of our people. I wish seminarians could read this. Thank you, Stephen, for helping people remember me.

I have a problem . I can no longer writ . May I put a thank you note in the. parish bulletin.

Dear people of Saint Anthony.

Thank you for the good wishes on my 90th B-day. Thank you for all the encouraging and kind words. I too, carry you in my heart with great affection. Joy and peace to all of you.

Joe Smits

Stephen,

Thank you for your friendship over the many years. I always admired your dedication and commitment. I keep you close to the Lord.

Joe

My friends, Please know how moving this has been for Father Smits. To be remembered with such fondness and by so many is a rare experience in his life but one greatly appreciated. Now the Lord can dismiss his servant when the time is readied because his eyes have seen the goodness of the Lord.

Please also know how grateful I and the whole staff and Commissions of the parish are for the many of you (over 1100) who came to our Live Nativity to awaken little ones to the message of the Christ child. We were blessed with a real baby this year and I am grateful for the young family who sat in the cold December night with their little one. It brought tears to my eyes. Thanks to all who worked so hard to put on a very simple depiction of Christ's birth.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry