

Column041821

Companions on the Journey

April 18, 2021

Dear Friends,

This past week I celebrated yet another birthday—my 74th. When I was first assigned to Saint Anthony's as pastor back in June 1991 I was 44 years old. It has been an amazing thirty years. While I am not yet in wind down mode this birthday is a milestone of sorts. Archdiocesan policy is that a pastor who is to celebrate his 75th birthday in a given year must, in the preceding September, submit his resignation as pastor in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Canon Law. This applies to bishops as well.

That's the bad news. The good news is that the resignation letter does not have to be accepted by the bishop or does not have to be accepted immediately. The rest of the good news is that in the letter of resignation the priest/pastor may make requests of the bishop. So in my case I will write a letter of resignation by this coming fall, in September 2021. In that letter I will tender my resignation as pastor of Saint Anthony's. In that letter I will also make a request of the Archbishop. I will ask for the Archbishop to allow me to serve an additional year as pastor.

My rationale is that as of June 2022 when I will be 75, I will also be completing my 49th year as a priest. I would like to be able to celebrate my fiftieth year, or Golden Jubilee as a priest, right here at Saint Anthony's where I have served for so long and where I celebrated my Silver Jubilee in 1998 along with my classmate, Father Tom Troy, of happy memory and for whom I still pray daily.

Fifty years of anything is a worthy human moment and for me to be able to celebrate it with you after all these years would bring me a great deal of joy and serve as a fitting capstone to my years of priestly ministry in your midst. In preparation for this approaching moment I have directed staff, Pastoral Council and core Team to draw up a parish profile for Saint Anthony's that I will present to the Archbishop prior to his making any decision about the next pastor so that he will be able to have a clearer sense of our parish, its history, its greatness, its potential and especially the kind of leadership needed for the foreseeable future. This will also be presented to the new pastor when eventually assigned here.

I have shared this with other parishioners and some have asked me to stay on indefinitely but I believe it is time to hand the baton to the next runner in the relay race. I will have completed my leg of the race and will be ready to hand over the administrative and pastoral responsibilities. Archdiocesan policy is that a pastor may retire to any parish in the Archdiocese (or to the Archdiocesan Villa) except the parish where he last served as pastor. The wisdom of this is rather self-evident. The new pastor needs a clean slate and surely does not need the former pastor looking over his shoulder or being appealed to by parishioners.

So that is where we are and will probably be for the next year or two. My sense is that the Archbishop will gladly allow me to stay on for my fiftieth. These years surely have not been lacking in their excitement. And I do not in any way think that my life is over or that I am now an old man. The Lord didn't call Abraham to even begin his great faith adventure until he was seventy-five. This is just another new beginning.

**In the Peace of Christ,
Msgr. McHenry**