

Column021923

Companions on the Journey

February 19, 2023

Dear Friends,

At a recent meeting of the Pastoral Council I asked for some feedback on behalf of you the parishioners about my retirement this coming June. They asked me to use my columns to provide some insight and information on the whole process and how it works and what it will look like here at Saint Anthony's. So, in response to their comments I will do my best.

In the Code of Canon Law, when a priest or bishop actively serving in a diocesan or pastoral or ministerial assignment, reaches the age of 75, he is required to write a letter of resignation to his bishop or superior. This applies to bishops and priests. The offer to resign does not have to be accepted but it has to be offered by the priest or bishop. In my case I wrote to Archbishop Perez the September (2021) before my 75th birthday (04/15/2022). I resigned as pastor of the parish of Saint Anthony's. However, I also indicated (which you are allowed to do) my willingness to stay on in the role of pastor for the succeeding year. I did make that request. I indicated that such a request would take me to June of 2023 and at that time I would be completing fifty years as a priest and concluding my 32nd year as pastor here.

When I arrived at Saint Anthony's I was 44 years old. I am just about 76 years old now. Saint Anthony's median age is somewhere around 38 years. That may not be the "look" of the parish at Sunday Mass but I assure you it is the reality of the parish. Our parish needs a younger pastor. I have loved all my years here and treasure them. I also know that my energy has diminished somewhat and my stamina in dealing with administrative, sacramental, spiritual, professional responsibilities has ebbed.

So what is going to happen? I received recently a letter from Archbishop Perez. He has accepted my resignation as of June 19, 2023. Ordinations to the priesthood will take place on May 20, 2023. Those young men to be ordained that day will conclude their ordination ceremony with Archbishop Perez telling them where they will be assigned. The day before, Friday May 19, 2023 the changes of pastors will be announced. IN that announcement I will be named as pastor emeritus of Saint Anthony's. I will no longer receive an assignment from the Archbishop. I will be retired. I am free to live wherever I want. If I desire to relocate to South Carolina I could do that. If I wanted to live in a parish in the Archdiocese I would arrange that with the particular local pastor. If I chose to live in our family seashore house at the Jersey shore I could (But I have ruled that out for several reasons, although I do expect to be able to spend more time there in my retirement years.)

Most likely, but not definitively, I will live in an apartment of my choosing for the next four or five years. If I am healthy enough to still be going strong when I turn 80 I will stay in the apartment. If not, I will probably relocate to one of the archdiocesan Villas for Priests. When my niece relocated last year to Colorado various family members were able to have and use the furniture and adornments from her house, in their own homes. I have a complete bedroom set, living room set, kitchen setup complete with cookery and plates and silverware. Everything I need to outfit an apartment is all taken care of. It just needs now the right place and the right time to move those things. Hopefully, I will be within a fifteen or twenty minute drive of this area so that I will be able to stay connected to the area and occasionally slip back in to help by celebrating a Mass or help with confessions. Who knows? I will try to provide some more information with what I expect to be doing in the months after I retire. I will do that in a future column. In the meantime thanks for the prayers and thanks for listening.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry