

Column022623

Companions on the Journey

February 26, 2023

Dear Friends,

Following up on a recent meeting of the Pastoral Council and some questions and emotions that parishioners are feeling as the time for my retirement approaches, I want to do a little more writing to give you a sense of what the transition period will be.

I do not know who will be assigned here to fill the role of pastor this coming June. I have met with the Archbishop, Bishop Senior (chancellor of the Seminary) and Father Mike Hennelly Secretary for the Clergy. In each case they had a series of questions about our parish and the people and the needs and the blessings. In each case they sought from me what I believed to be the greatest need going forward. Tending to the faith of those who are participating so that you may remain strong in your faith and hope and love. Finding ways to invite and encourage the younger families with children to participate in the Mass and become ever more faithful to the celebration of the Eucharist and invested in the life of the parish community. In each case, how to help the parishioners come to believe in, know and love Our Lord more than they do right now.

When I am named Pastor Emeritus I will no longer receive an assignment from the Archbishop. But that does not mean that I stop being priest. I have already spoken to Father Jim McGuinn who is the Rector of Saint Joseph in the Hills, (otherwise known as the Malvern Retreat House). I have indicated that I would be willing to preach some Retreats for them after consulting our schedules. He will be in touch. I have also spoken with Father Jim Collins who is a Redemptorist priest who was once the chaplain at Gwynedd Mercy University but was then transferred to the San Alphonso Retreat House in Long Branch New Jersey. Father Collins I have known for many years and he asked me if I would be willing to do some midweek retreats for them. I am willing. Again, considering calendars etc.

I have done some Radio work with Kathleen McCarthy on her In His Sign Radiocast on Thursdays. I will be hosting on March 9 and March 23, Thursdays at 4pm, 800 AM) for her. I expect to be involved in some healing ministry because at this point in my life that is what the Lord is leading me into. I do not know what form that will take.

Once the new pastor is assigned and settles in and gets his feet underneath himself and gets a sense of the parish and you, the wonderful parishioners, there will then be time for me to return for a visit here or there or to celebrate Mass or to hear confessions. Yes, I will be handing over the administration of the parish but I am not breaking my connection to the parish. But the way I relate to you will be different. What this will be like will be a mini-version of what it was like for the apostles and disciples and followers of Jesus after he left them at Calvary but returned after resurrection. He abides but in a different way. The Father says that He is not about to leave them orphaned. No that is not what the Lord does. So, I will be going. So I will be connected. I know you believe you need this. I recognize that. But you may not fully realize that you are not the only ones who need this. And that, of course, is why we continue to pray.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry