

Column061123

Companions on the Journey

June 11, 2023

Dear Friends,

This Sunday is a very happy day for me in my personal life and my life as your parish priest these past thirty-two years. The first of my words to you is: grateful. Please know how grateful I am to you. You have given me such support all the years. Especially I the year of Father Troy's death, and the year our church burned down and our 125th anniversary and the corona-virus years. You are so steadfast and so faithful. You will probably never know how you touch my life inspire me , encourage me to beacon of hope for you, spur me onto to be the man of prayer I want to be but so often fall short of becoming.

You accepted me as your pastor from the very beginning. I know there are still many of you who knew and loved Monsignor Eugene Sullivan, my predecessor. He was a wonderful priest and a holy man. Even the priests of the Archdiocese knew that Monsignor was a holy priest. And when priests and people agree so readily on something like a priest's holiness, the results are usually very reliable. Monsignor Sullivan was my Spiritual Director when I first entered the Seminary in 1963. He did not arrive at Saint Anthony's until June 1972. I arrived in 1991 and when I visited him at the Villa in Darby, he was dying. He was very gracious to me, and he said that he could not be happier with the selection Cardinal Bevilacqua had made to replace him. I was very touched by the warmth and hospitality of his remarks.

He died that September. You gave him a great send off that day. I saw the depth of your love and the power of your prayer and the flame of your devotion to your priests. I knew then that I had found my home. There are many of you of have a "Saint Anthony story" about how you came to find your way here and the unusual circumstances. So many of you will speak about how you "found" your way here. I did too. And the fact that I have been able and blessed to serve you these past years is a sign of the goodness of God's grace and how grace will lead us home, and God's light will be a very kindly light as it leads us to Him.

My friends that "leading us to Him" is really what Saint Anthony's is about. Jesus was the One who came into this world to pitch his own tent among ours. He never really had a place here that he could call his own. No home of his own, few clothes, not even his own burial plot. And yet, all of heaven is his. And now, because he has triumphed over the grave, all of heaven is ours. He came to restore the divine-human friendship intended from the beginning and created by God, yet sundered by our sin—mistrust, disobedience, arrogance. He still offers us heaven even though we are still susceptible to the lie. You have allowed me to be priest for you, encouraged me to be my best self even with my idiosyncrasies and quirks. You responded to my leadership even though we did not always agree on what was the best thing to do. All in all, our has been a very good marriage. I have loved being your priest. And you will see my face again. I will find a way for us to connect via the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. But until that day please continue to pray for me, I will for thee. And then, one day—heaven!

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry