

## Companions on the Journey

June 18, 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. I hand the baton to Father Jim McGuinn who is a priest for over thirty years here in the Archdiocese. I am happy. Not to leave but to return to the Lord his gentle yoke as the pastor of the wonderful people of Saint Anthony's. I have loved being your pastor and your parish priest.

You did so many little things to make me feel welcome. You wanted me to bring my family to Mass here so you could get to know them too. That is so important to a priest that you also love his family too. They have made their own sacrifices to give me to you. They want to know that you will love the priest the way they love their brother or their son.

You prayed for me and you prayed with me. That really made a difference. Please make room on your prayer list and add Father Jim's name. He will so benefit from your prayers. They will help to make him holy. They will help to attune him to the grace of the Holy Spirit.

At a luncheon recently one of my priest classmates who is also retiring said that he came across a letter that the pastor he was replacing twenty-three years ago had written to the parishioners of the parish at that time. The pastor asked for support and specifically for each family to add five dollars to what they were giving in the collection because the new pastor would need a little bit more to do some of the things that needed to be done. This priest said that he was not going to do that. Instead of asking the people for an increase in their donations, he believed what the new pastor really needed was the support of the pastor by means of their "presence" and their participation in the Eucharist. There are still so many parishioners but not so many participating and praying each Sunday in the Eucharist. Jesus always comes when we summon Him. But the Lord also summons us. I would do that on Sunday mornings by ringing the bell. Please come out to meet and greet your new pastor. I will continue to be praying for all of you as I have always done. But Father Jim needs your encouragement and your love and your presence. He needs you to allow him to lead you in the practice of your faith and in the reflecting necessary to enjoy a happy life.

If you have not returned from before the corona-virus, please come back to meet your new pastor. He has a great sense of humor, a charming personality and a love for the Lord. He is also musical. He is also tall. The Lord is giving you a respite from height-challenged pastors to height-enhanced pastors. There is a time and a place for everything. With those words in my ears I salute you and say to you: "Farewell!" I love you. I will always love you. I pray for you. I will always pray for you. I thank you for all you have done in making me the priest God has desired me to be. I must go now but I will not be far away. When the dust settles you will see my face again. But until those days may the Lord bless us all and give us his peace.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry

