

A message from Fr. Mark Jurzyk to the people of St. Joseph Parish

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I begin my priestly ministry among you, members of St. Joseph Parish. I was sent to you by the bishop of the Diocese of Joliet to continue the ministry of my predecessor, Fr. Marcin Michalak. To be a pastor means to be “a loving father, a gentle shepherd, and a wise teacher of the people” so that they may be led to Christ. Obviously, the role is one of great responsibility, and it is a significant challenge for every pastor who takes it seriously. We as Christians, are fully aware that it is God Himself who inspires, enriches and strengthens all of us to be loving, gentle and prudent as we live out our vocations as mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, sons and daughters, married or single, as priests, nuns or religious brothers. Only by recognizing that it is Jesus who acts in us and with us, do we have the courage and power to continue the way of the Gospel even if it is accompanied by discomfort, difficulties or persecution. To understand that He is the ultimate source of everything that is good in us, through us and around us, calls us to give Him proper praise in the liturgy and in private, in church and at home. Everything then that is good in the parish, as well as the ministry of the priest directs our thoughts to God. My entire family lives 5,000 miles away in Poland and Europe, so I am even more encouraged to call you my family. I hope that you will welcome me not only as a pastor but also as a fellow Christian and member of your extended family. I invite those who are much younger to accept my ministry and guidance of a father, those of my age of a brother, and those who are much older than me, of a son. I would like to share with you what Jesus revealed to us, what the Catholic Church teaches, and what I personally believe with the same attitude as I share it with my natural family: my parents, my brother and sister, and other relatives.

To give you a brief introduction, I was born in 1966 in central Poland in the city of Konin, which is the size of Joliet. After I graduated from high school, I entered the diocesan seminary, and on May 25, 1991, at the age of 25, I was ordained to the priesthood. I served as an associate pastor in my diocese for three years, and then my bishop sent me to study philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin. Two years later, I also started postgraduate studies in Spiritual Theology. I earned my licentiate in theology (STL) in 2000. My study in philosophy (specifically, ethics) led me to do research in American legal ethics in the United States. I planned to stay here for just a year but I did not know that God's plans were different. I began my priestly ministry in the

Diocese of Joliet in 2005, being a pastor at St. John the Apostle Parish in Villa Park, and for the last 12 years served as pastor at Corpus Christi Parish in Carol Stream.

The main care of the pastor is the spiritual growth of all the members of the parish community. I hope that my ministry in the coming years will help grow your relationship with Christ and your knowledge of the faith, increase your love and understanding of our Holy and Apostolic Catholic Church, and amplify your Christian virtues. But one cannot forget that I, a priest, a minister of the sacraments and a spiritual father, need to and want to grow in faith, wisdom and virtues like you and alongside you. I hope that you and your faith will inspire me to do that. I try to accept every year, month, and even day of my priestly life as a beautiful gift from God given for my sanctification through my priestly ministry. As the people in every parish I served were an inspiration to me in my spiritual journey, I am convinced that it will be the same here at St. Joseph Parish.

I am praying for you. May your prayers surround me and my ministry.

In Christ,

Fr. Mark Jurzyk

