



*Diocese of Fall River*  
*Office of the Bishop*  
*Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.*

August 30, 2025

Dear Parishioners of Saint Ann Parish,

I am writing to provide you with an update on Father James Fitzpatrick.

As you know, in February of 2023, I announced to your parish that I was placing Father Fitzpatrick on administrative leave after receiving an allegation of conduct unbecoming of a priest, which did not involve a minor. Father Fitzpatrick subsequently gave his resignation as Pastor.

The Diocese investigated the allegation and found that Father Fitzpatrick engaged in ministerial boundary violations in communications to another adult.

Over the last two years, Father Fitzpatrick has willingly participated in and has now completed a comprehensive program of remediation and accountability overseen by experts. He has also used this time for deep prayer and reflection.

Father Fitzpatrick's case was reviewed by the newly created Restoration to Ministry Advisory Committee, (the "RMAC"), which is composed of lay and clergy experts in mental health, addiction, ministry, and law to advise me on whether a priest with past serious misconduct can safely return to ministry. In accordance with its guidelines, the Committee reviewed evidence of repentance, remediation, understanding of harm caused, and a demonstrated change of behavior in Father Fitzpatrick, with a focus on ensuring the safety of the community.

After considering their advice, I am returning Father Fitzpatrick to ministry and assigning him to serve as Parochial Vicar at Holy Name Parish in Fall River, effective September 1.

I understand that Father Fitzpatrick's removal from the ministry was distressing for all of you and that many of you have been interested in an update on his progress. I believe that Father Fitzpatrick will do well at his new parish and is entering a bright new period in his priesthood and life.

Please know that I am grateful for your understanding, patience, and goodness throughout what was a difficult matter for the parish. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the priests and deacons who have served you in recent years. I know that Father Matt Laird, who recently became your pastor, is dedicated to continuing to build the community of faithful disciples at St. Ann Parish now and in the coming years.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.  
Bishop of Fall River