

Dear Parishioners at Saint Damian Parish,

First of all, I would like to thank all of you for the warm welcome you gave me at all the masses last weekend. I truly appreciate your kindness and hospitality. For those of you who were unable to attend Mass last weekend, I have included a brief biography in this weekend's bulletin. I hope it gives you an opportunity to get to know me a little bit better, and I look forward to meeting you in the weeks ahead.

I was born and raised in Vietnam in a large family of nine children – seven boys and two girls. My father passed away 26 years ago. My mother is 91 years old and is in poor health. She lives with my sister in Vietnam, who lovingly cares for her.

The Vietnam war ended when I was four years old. From that time on, my family, like many other Vietnamese families, lived under a harsh communist regime. Looking back on my family's history during those difficult years, I realize that our strong faith in God sustained us through every trial. It gave us hope in times of uncertainty, strength in moments of hardship, and the courage to persevere. Those experiences taught me to trust in God's providence and helped shape the person and priest I am today.

Throughout my childhood, teenage years, and young adulthood, God called me to become a priest in many different ways, and through different people, especially through my parish pastor and my own father. That call became stronger and clearer when I was 22 years old, and I responded with a "Yes" to God's invitation to serve Him as a priest. However, because of the restrictions imposed by the communist regime, which sought to interfere with the life of the Church, my journey toward the priesthood was not always easy. After six years of seeking a way to enter the seminary in Vietnam without success, God opened a new door for me. Through the grace of God and the support of my bishop, I was sent to America to continue my journey toward the priesthood and fulfill my vocation dream.

I came to America in 1999 and studied English at Divine Word College in Dubuque, Iowa. In 2000, I was sent to Mundelein Seminary to start my priestly formation. After completing my formation and theological studies at Mundelein Seminary, I was ordained a priest in 2005 by Cardinal Francis Goerge.

With the encouragement and support of my bishop, I remained in America to continue my studies and to serve in priestly ministry. Later, in 2014, Cardinal Francis George officially incardinated me into the Presbyterate of the Archdiocese of Chicago, making me a priest of the Archdiocese. In the last 21 years of my priestly ministry, I have had the privilege of serving in six parishes in different roles as associate pastor, administrator, and pastor.

Now, I have been assigned here to be with you. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to serve you and to walk together with you in faith as we continue our journey toward Christ.

Please keep me in your prayers as I begin this new chapter of my priestly ministry. Be assured that you and your loved ones will always be remembered in my prayers as well.

May God bless you all.

Fr. Joseph Le