

FAREWELL MESSAGE

Since my ordination sixteen years ago, I have seen Mass attendance decrease during the summer months of outdoor activities and family trips. In turn, northern resort parishes experience an increase in attendance, indicating that many – *hopefully all* – of you continue to attend Sunday Mass. Because of this seasonal reality, I will not see many of you as my assignment here concludes on June 30.

I am looking forward to the potluck meal after Sunday Mass this weekend, I have enjoyed these events with their fellowship and high-quality cuisine. I thank the generous and hard-working volunteers who are making this happen, only one week after our labor-intensive parish festival! Since I don't know everybody's name, I hope you will introduce yourself and your family so that I may personally say goodbye.

I will miss you – the people in the pews are the joy of priesthood. Your attendance at Mass has helped me to share and to grow in faith.

Parishioners are a priest's family; celebrating Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, and Weddings is contrasted by the tragedy of sickness, terminal illness, and the hope of Funeral Masses. Watching our young people grow in stature and faith during their first sacramental years is especially gratifying. Faithful participation in your transitions of joy and sorrow give special meaning to the title "father."

There are many volunteers who have helped keep our parish family together and enabled the assignment of a new Parochial Administrator. If I try to express my gratitude to all by name, someone will surely be missed. I can say, however, that I saw most of our hard-working volunteers participating in our liturgies and Parish Festival last weekend.

Like me, many of our volunteers are approaching their octogenarian years and will soon retire. To continue helping this parish thrive and grow, younger volunteers need to step in as many of our incumbents – to use a polite term – "age out."

Finally, I would be especially grateful if you would discern how to use your gifts from the Holy Spirit to form groups to prayerfully focus on hospitality, faith formation, and liturgy and music. Though my hopes for these three groups to form before my departure did not come to fruition, the seeds have been sown – if they take root, this parish can thrive with a lighter load for all in a culture of transparency and "cross-pollination."

It has been a blessed privilege to serve you for the past three years. I hope more of you will become actively involved serving each other as you welcome Fr. Justus as your new acting Pastor.

May God bless you all!

Fr. Doug