

JUNE 15, 2021

STATEMENT BY THE DIOCESE OF ROCKFORD IN REGARD TO HOLY CROSS PARISH, BATAVIA

As previously announced in the May 31 statement by the Diocese of Rockford, as part of the number of changes of priest assignments in the Diocese of Rockford that are typically announced at this time of year, Father James Parker was informed that his time as pastor at Holy Cross Parish in Batavia would conclude.

Father Parker was appointed pastor in 2014 for a six-year term, and he was, in fact, allowed a seventh year. His opinion that this appointment was for an indefinite duration is incorrect. The law of the Diocese of Rockford provides that pastors have a six-year term of office; this was the law in force when Father Parker was appointed pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Batavia and remains in force today. The priests of the Diocese of Rockford, including Father Parker have received a copy of this law as part of their orientation process upon being ordained to the priesthood. Father Parker's letter of appointment did not state that the appointment was being made contrary to the law of the Diocese of Rockford or as an exception to it. The jurisprudence of the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome has recognized the validity of this Diocesan law and has upheld this application of it. Thus, Father Parker's appointment was made according to the law of the Diocese of Rockford, that is, for a six-year term, and his statement to the contrary is without a factual basis. Father Parker had been informed of this last week.

Father Parker was officially notified in writing on June 9, 2021, that his term of office had lapsed, and, in accord with canon 186 of the Code of Canon Law, his term as pastor has ceased, and the parish of Holy Cross in Batavia does not currently have a pastor. This notification was a valid act within the authority and discretion of the Diocesan Bishop. Since the office of pastor is vacant, Father Jared Twenty has been appointed as parochial administrator, effective June 16, 2021, and the appointment is a valid act within the authority and discretion of the Bishop.

Since last February, efforts had been made to address with Father Parker, in a private manner, various concerns that had arisen regarding his service as pastor. Father Parker refused to engage in that dialogue and informed Bishop David Malloy that he would address the concerns in writing. Father Parker failed to provide any such correspondence, despite having had three months to do so, so a just resolution of those concerns has not been possible. Father Parker has been notified in writing by Bishop Malloy that as a result of his lack of cooperation and refusal to discuss the concerns, he would not receive a new assignment at this time.

Father Parker was also informed he would be provided a diocesan residence which he has declined. Contrary to public speculation, Father Parker will also be provided compensation and health insurance.

The Diocese of Rockford asks for prayers for Father Twenty, Father Parker, and for all the priests of the Diocese who are in the process of engaging changes in their ministry at this time.