

Pastor's Notes: A New Year of Priesthood

July 4 & July 11, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

On July 1, I celebrated my 16th anniversary of ordination to the holy priesthood, and I am very grateful for the abundant blessings of these 16 years. I reflect on the many fruits I've witnessed and the transitions and challenges since I've become the Pastor of our growing Basilica parish and the Judicial Vicar of the Tribunal of Knoxville, among my other responsibilities in the Diocese. I am thankful for the gifts that have enabled me to serve in these multiple capacities, but I often wonder where the time and energy will come from to fulfill them all with justice. As part of the answer to that question, I am being led to interior transformation to strengthen my leadership. Recently I shared with the parish staff the plan for my next transition, and I would like to share it with all of you.

Tribunal Move Off-Campus and My Schedule

When establishing the new Tribunal last July, during the coronavirus pandemic, Bishop Stika had asked us to provide space in our Basilica parish office for our first year, and we did so. As of this past week, the Tribunal has now relocated to its own office, on the fourth floor of the Dome Building. Having a separate off-campus location for my Tribunal work will help me focus the attention this much-needed service in our diocese deserves. But it also means I will necessarily be less available at the Basilica during the week. My new regular schedule is to devote Friday through Sunday to our parish needs and Tuesday through Thursday to the Tribunal Office, keeping Monday as my sabbath day of retreat. I ask your understanding as I maintain this tighter schedule, acknowledging the inevitable emergencies and exceptions that arise and will require adaptations.

Staff Delegation

Though I've been charged with more than one apostolate, God has also blessed me with capable support staff to whom I can entrust day-to-day operations. One of the ways in which I've been called to change over the years is that instead of meeting with each individual to work out every detail (details are not my strong suit!), I encourage my fellow clergy, staff, and ministry leaders to collaborate to implement my vision for the parish. I ask that you work directly with these key delegates in the roles I've assigned:

- Fr. Valentin and our other priests on campus (**Sacramental and pastoral needs**);
- Dcn. Gaspar (**Charitable outreach and the Cause of Fr. Patrick Ryan**);
- Dcn. Hicks (**Liturgy, marriage preparation, and stewardship**);
- Dcn. Tom (**Facilities projects, interfaith & spiritual life**);
- Marina Delaney (**Bookkeeper, managing all money matters, as well as human resources**);
- Maria Rist (**my Administrative Assistant—scheduling, communication, ministry coordination**);
- Dan Pacitti (**RCIA and inquiries about the Catholic faith**);
- Florence Porter (**Religious Education program**);
- Kalista Bartee (**Youth Group**);

...and many other capable leaders—too many to list here! When you have a question or need, please reach out to the appropriate delegates, who are poised to help you more readily than I can! If you're not sure whom to call, contact the office staff and you will be directed to the right person.

Under One Roof Projects

Thanks to your generous pledges to the Under One Roof campaign, we are moving forward with several facilities projects: **roof replacement, HVAC upgrade, and space needs**. We are in the final stages of the contract to replace our roof, following a recent structural engineering analysis and repricing of materials. The roof project should take about two months to complete, but it will not affect the interior of the church. Although it will take a couple of years to receive all the donations from the campaign, the Diocese has agreed to extend us a bridge loan so that we can begin the work. The HVAC upgrade options are still being considered, but the loan will enable us to start this project as soon as we complete this discernment. Simultaneously, to address our space needs, we have begun the process of clearing out the "dungeon" area—the room at the back of Varallo Parish Hall, located directly under the vestibule—to become a new multipurpose room for Youth Group and other meetings. There is some cost to renovate this space to prepare it for occupancy, but it will cost a lot less than the potential bridge building that we had considered during the planning phase last year. We are hoping, with the help of volunteers, to be able to prepare this new space for you within the next few months!

I am ever humbled by the gifts you bring to our parish and to me, and that you continue to support me as your Pastor. I thank you for your patience if at times I am less immediately available, but I want to assure you that as I begin this 17th year of priesthood, I aim to offer my best to God in service to each parishioner as your Pastor, in such ways as God allows. My team of clergy and staff will help me to maximize what I can do for you and the good we can do together. Please continue to pray for me and for all priests!

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

