

July 18, 2021
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“The Apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.’”

Mark 6:30

Dear Families of St. Vincent’s,

Christ’s peace and blessings to you in these summer days! The Lord Jesus shows us that in the saving rhythms of the Christian life, there are times appointed for intense activity as well as for restorative rest.

In this spirit, I am writing to share with you details of my upcoming sabbatical at the beginning of August. Before the pandemic, I received permission from Bishop Rhoades to be away from St. Vincent’s on sabbatical from August 1 to November 30, 2021.

Priests of our Diocese are allowed to go on sabbatical for up to four months after their first 10 years of ordained ministry and then additionally every seven years after that. Fr. Polycarp has, for example, taken several sabbaticals during his ministry. This year marks my 20th year of Priestly ministry, and the time seems ripe for me to make my first sabbatical.

Thanks to a grant awarded through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program, my sabbatical is fully funded, with additional monies going to support programming at St. Vincent’s for spiritual growth during my time away and upon my return. Details of these will appear in future bulletin columns and on our website as they are finalized.

Many of you have asked me details of where I plan to go and what I plan to do. I wish to use the sabbatical to re-visit the places where the Lord has written His Gospel most deeply on my life, toward the goal of serving your discernment of how Christ is writing His Gospel in your life and in the life of our Parish. As one tangible fruit of the sabbatical, I hope to write a prayer book based on the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene, describing the spiritual meaning of its art and architecture but also as a practical guide to grow in our personal relationship of adoring Christ from the heart of the Church for the salvation of the world.

The first portion of my sabbatical will be spent traveling to Virginia and Washington, D.C. with my parents and our neighbors on Wallen Road, John Thistlethwaite and Kay Feichter. I have not been on an extended vacation with my Mom and Dad for sixteen years, and my life-long study of Thomas Jefferson---shared by my dear friends John and Kay---will provide a relaxing transition into the remainder of the sabbatical.

Toward the end of August, I hope to fly to France with Msgr. Bill Schooler, my first Pastor when I was newly ordained. We shall head from Paris to the medieval shrine in the south of France dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, St. Maximin la Sainte Baume, where I shall spend some days of retreat and begin writing.

I plan to spend most of September in Italy, where I lived for three years before entering seminary. In visiting places such as Turin, Assisi, and Sicily—some of them with my spiritual director from seminary days, Fr. William Kelly, a Priest of Boston---my home base through October will be Rome, which for several decades has been a restorative center of my spiritual life. I hope to spend some good time with our seminarians studying at the North American College, including St. Vincent’s own Sam Anderson. Most of the writing of the book on the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene will take place during this time.

The final portion of the sabbatical in November will be in Boston, back in the United States, with seminary friends from throughout New England. I shall return home to St. Vincent's in December, just in time for the beginning of Advent.

Sometimes a sabbatical is used as a transition time from one parish assignment to another, but I solemnly assure you that it is my intention---and, more importantly, that of Bishop Rhoades---for me to continue as Pastor of St. Vincent's for the foreseeable future upon my return. Our Diocese does not have term limits, and generally Pastors of the largest parishes remain where they are for many years. It is no coincidence that my predecessor, Msgr. John Kuzmich, was Pastor of St. Vincent's for twenty-nine years, and his predecessor, Fr. Lawrence Fettig, for twenty-one years. If you extrapolate forward from that, I should be your Pastor for thirty-seven years! In any case, my grave plot reserved in the Oratory cemetery most deeply reveals the trajectory of my Priestly aspirations to remain with you in life and in death, unto life eternal.

During my time away, Fr. Jay will assume all of my pastoral and administrative responsibilities, assisted by Fr. Eric and Fr. Polycarp. In addition to his hospital ministry, Fr. Eric will be adding scheduled office hours at St. Vincent's, as well as re-entering the regular rotation of presiders at all of our Masses, as well as Baptisms and funerals.

Because sabbatical time is designed to be a time genuinely away from ministerial demands, I shall not be receiving any regular communication with the Parish or parishioners, either formally or informally, from August 1 through November 30. Among other things, this means that I shall not be checking my e-mail or receiving calls or texts on my cell phone at all during these four months. Bishop Rhoades, Fr. Jay, and other Priests in positions of Diocesan responsibility will, of course, be able to contact me should the most serious need arise. This resolution will be very challenging for me, because I love you deeply, but necessary for authentically restorative rest. It will also be a graced opportunity for my discernment moving forward---having 488 contact numbers on my cell phone and innumerable contacts via e-mail is not a recipe for sustainable physical or spiritual health.

It is my plan to send occasional photos, videos, and perhaps some podcasts to St. Vincent's to be posted on our website, so that you can share in real time in the joys of my sabbatical. I shall also be hosting some sessions upon my return to share the fruits of my time away. I am thoroughly convinced that there are graces to be gained from one's absence as well as one's presence. Fr. Jay, for example, will have some final on-the-job training with lots of loving support from you before he is made a Pastor, in all likelihood next summer.

These final weeks of July are for me already filled with commitments, so I am grateful in advance for your allowing me the time I need to prepare for this great adventure. I promise to resume Friday suppers at parishioner homes soon after my return! Until then I carry all of you in my heart, and I ask you to pray that the Lord bless this time ahead for all of us, filled as it is with future gifts for our whole Parish family.

In St. Vincent's love of Christ,

Fr. Daniel Scheidt

P.S. Regularly checking our new and improved website (www.SaintV.org) will be the best way to stay connected with the graces of my sabbatical.