

Dear friends in Jesus Christ,

I wish you all **A Happy and Blessed Easter. The Lord is Risen! Alleluia!** Today I pray at the Altar of God that the Risen Lord Jesus blesses you all with renewed hope and faith. May the Light of Jesus Christ shine in your life. I hope and pray that you all are staying healthy and safe. Last year as the pandemic started, we were not able to celebrate the Holy Triduum but this year we are able to gather to celebrate our Holy Week liturgy with safety precautions. We thank our loving God always for His love, care and protection and keeping us all healthy and safe during this challenging time. God is faithful and has walked with His people all the days of this earthly history and accompanies us still. It's really wonderful to see many of you in the church. I sincerely acknowledge and appreciate all of you for your love, patience, and cooperation in your attendance in the church and for your kind generosity towards our parish. I also believe that some of you have already received your covid vaccine or in the process of getting it.

I'm sure you all know about my Visa status. Since I'm on R-1 Visa (Religious Visa) in the United States and that expires on June 1, 2021, the Archdiocese applied for my Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) last year, but the process is taking so much of time due to the pandemic situation and new immigration policy. Before the pandemic, the process took only 5 to 7 months but now it is taking 16 to 20 months. So, the diocese applied for the extension of my Visa and I received the approval of it till August 28 only. As per the diocesan policy, I can serve the diocese only if I have legal Visa validity. Since my Visa expires in August 28, my assignment as the pastor of St. Francis Church is till June 30, 2021 only. After that I need to return to India and wait there for a year to reapply for new Visa to come to the United States.

I'm writing this to you now to say goodbye to you all because I'm leaving to India on May 10 for taking part in the election to elect new superior of our religious order. I don't know whether I'll come back since I've only less than three months Visa validity. I'll come back on June 10 if the immigration office in India lets me in. Otherwise, this will be my goodbye words to you all. If I come back, I plan to stay on the Island till the end of June and spend the rest of the days till August 28 in some other places (not yet decided, waiting to hear from the Archbishop) and then return to India again after that if still the Green Card process is being delayed. Meanwhile if a miracle happens to expedite the process of my green card, I'll continue to stay in the diocese depending on my new assignment.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to each one of you dear friends. Thank you all so much for all your love, care, friendship, understanding, cooperation, and generosity for me during last four years of my stay as a pastor of St. Francis Church. I loved being with you and enjoyed my stay and service in this parish community. You are all wonderful, loving, and generous people. I'm taking lots of memories with me. St. Francis Parish community will be always close to my heart. I miss you and I'll really miss you all but please be assured that you are all in my prayers. I'll keep in touch with you and update you about me if any change. Please keep me in your prayers, especially for my Visa status. God bless you always. Stay safe and healthy. Happy Easter once again !

Fr. Watson

