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Dear Parishioners,

At the last meeting for parish lay leaders that we had, I shared with those present that Archbishop Francis Schulte used to say that one of the greatest challenges priests face in the course of their ministry is “letting go and holding on,” specifically, letting go of one parish and its people when it is time to move and then immediately taking hold of the people in the new assignment he will be entering into. Having moved a number of times in my own forty-four years of priestly ministry, I learned first-hand how true the Archbishop was in this observation.

In my very first homily here when I came as your pastor 4 years ago, I told you that, because I was then 66 years old and because retirement age in this diocese for priests is 70, I would only be with you four years, joking that, if along the way of our journey together you decided you didn’t like me, there was already light at the end of the tunnel. Well, it came pretty quickly, but it is time for me to walk into the light!

Now, I won’t actually be retiring, not just yet. While I love parish ministry and equally love serving in the Office of Worship, I do not have the energy to continue doing both. And so, while I am retiring from parish ministry, I am continuing my service as Director of the Office of Worship as my one job – a pace more in keeping with my age, I think. And while I look forward to the work we do in the Office of Worship, letting go of you is not quite as easy as I thought it might be. Though we have been together for only four years, we have forged bonds of friendship, support and care that have been good for me and so difficult to let go. For all you have done for me, I thank you! For any good I have done for you, thank you for allowing me into your lives in this way. For the times that I have not been the priest you needed me or wanted me to be, I express my sorrow and ask your gracious forgiveness.

MISSION STATEMENT

“Our Lady of the Rosary Parish is a strong, vibrant community of faith serving God with our time, talents, and treasure. By following the teachings of Jesus Christ and through the guidance of Our Blessed Mother Mary, we foster the spiritual growth of our Parish family and provide charitable service to the surrounding community.”

Though we now say “Farewell,” I am confident that our paths will cross again, and I look forward to those occasions.

I would like to offer my very special thanks to the parish staff members who have worked with me these years and who serve you both conscientiously and well: our Deacons, Jim Bialas and Ron Drez; the parish office staff, Grace Donnaud and Dee Collura; our newest staff member and church custodian, Robert Pedesco; our music ministry leaders, Megan Dearie and Tommy Zanca. This is a great team; I was blessed to have worked with them in your service.

Your next pastor, Father Jonathan Hemelt, is, as you know, away this Summer continuing his studies in Canon Law for future work in the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal. Beginning next weekend and for the entire month of July, Father Jeffrey Montz, a member of the faculty of Notre Dame Seminary, will be with you for sacramental ministry, along with the Dominican Fathers who have been assisting with Masses on Monday and Tuesday each week.

Actually, while my farewell reception is this Sunday at Noon, I will finish moving my belongings to Diamondhead during this week and will be here for the 7:00 a.m. Masses on Wednesday and Thursday. Retired Archbishop Alfred Hughes will be here for the Mass on Friday morning and Fr. Montz will begin serving you on Saturday, July 1.

Please keep me in your prayers, and know that you will be in mine.

I told you last weekend that there would be scaffolding up in church this weekend, but there isn't! Because of a funeral on Friday, the painting contractor has decided to wait until Monday to put the scaffolding in place. If the work around the base of the dome is not completed by June 30, the scaffolding will have to remain up the weekend of July 1-2.

I am now in the 15th week of my expected 6-week recuperation from bunion surgery! I return to the doctor this week for new X-rays to see if the bone is healing any better. Please keep me in your prayers!

Painting on both the exterior and interior of the residence continues. It will all be completed soon, as the final work will be painting the suite I now occupy before Fr. Hemelt arrives. We had some rather extensive repair work to do to the walls and ceilings of the guest rooms on the second floor and so those two rooms needed to be completely repainted.

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