



OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Parish and School Families,

“Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ He told them, ‘Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.’” (Mk. 1: 35-38)

This passage is on my heart as I share news with you about new clergy assignments for priests at Our Lady of Good Counsel. With every priest change, we should recognize the sadness and grief which comes with goodbyes while remaining grateful to God for providing generous and devoted spiritual fathers to a parish. I shared recently in a homily the wisdom of a good friend of mine who said: “There is a blessing in our humanity with our capacity to grieve, as it points to our capacity to love.” How true that is. And while our hearts grieve, we can be grateful for the mysterious way in which God provides for us in those we love. With the eyes of faith, we see the merciful and loving movement of God and sense a true joy in His providential care for us.

With that in mind, the passage I started with points to some core elements of the priestly identity. The first of which is prayer. As the priest is immersed in a life of prayer, his heart is also immersed in a profound relationship of love and trust that grows deeper and deeper with the Lord each day. The priest seeks to follow the example of Jesus as he prays with ears open to God’s call and a heart at peace, ready to be faithful to what God asks, saying, “for this purpose I have come.” In responding generously to his call, the priest lives and breathes the joy, peace, and love that animate his soul knowing he is on mission!

In the Archdiocese of Detroit, our number of priestly vocations is decreasing as priests retire and ordination classes remain small. This reality prompts the necessary changes to priestly assignments as we find ourselves challenged by fewer priests in active ministry. And yet, our priests remain committed to their call! In light of that, there will be a number of changes in clergy assignments in the coming months to address the needs of the Archdiocese.

I mention these reflections because this parish has been truly blessed by **Fr. Anthony and Fr. Zaid**, and it is such a gift for me to serve alongside them. They are truly brothers in the Lord who bring so much joy to me (and all of you) through their generous hearts. **Both of them will be reassigned beginning July 1st.** What a blessing it has been for me to see them offer themselves tirelessly every day, very often quietly and humbly, to minister here. They are devoted priests, and their lives of prayer and readiness to serve is inspiring. While it is never easy to leave a parish family, every priest knows they serve shoulder to shoulder with their priestly brothers of the Archdiocese who are also faithfully ministering to those entrusted to their care. And so now it is time for Fr. Anthony and Fr. Zaid to minister to other communities.

First, let me speak about **Fr. Anthony**. I am deeply grateful to him for the years he has poured into our parish. He is a man of deep faith and fierce devotion. He truly exemplifies the priestly heart with the heart of a spiritual father, and most especially, he is a true believer, passionate about accompanying people to encounter Christ. And even though we differ on what is the best college football team, we still sit beside each other and cheer on our teams! Because of Fr. Anthony’s generosity and devotion to ministry, he has accepted a new assignment to help a brother priest with three parishes and a school. **Fr. Anthony will begin his new assignment at St. Augustine (Richmond), Holy Family (Memphis) and St. Mary Mystical Rose (Armada) on July 1st.** His experience and pastoral wisdom will be an incredible gift to those communities and to Fr. Mark, their pastor.



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As a newly ordained priest, **Fr. Zaid** was assigned to our parish and placed within a loving community that would continue the formation which began during his seminary years. Fr. Zaid has poured himself out so generously to many parts of the parish. Normally a newly ordained priest is not assigned with his former rector, and that was likely a surprise to him! But our assignments brought us together again, and I've been able to marvel at the many gifts I saw during his years of seminary formation come to life. The first assignment for a priest, which is normally three years, is marked by so many "firsts," and I pray that those experiences will continue to shape and form him as **he moves on to his new assignment at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak. That assignment will also begin on July 1st.**

I look forward to honoring and thanking Fr. Anthony and Fr. Zaid, because in their acceptance of new assignments, they are trusting God's providence as they move forward, and in responding so generously, they are witnessing to and radiating the priestly identity as they offer their lives to the Lord. That's inspiring! Events and plans will be communicated soon to celebrate them.

Looking forward, I am deeply moved by God's providence and the goodness of the Archbishop. For decades, Our Lady of Good Counsel has been a parish for newly ordained priests to begin their ministry. Our parish is known as a loving community that accompanies young priests and encourages them as they grow in their priestly identity. **In honoring that unique charism, the Archdiocese will assign a newly ordained priest to our parish. Fr. Tommy Ngo who will be ordained on May 18th will begin his ministry with us on July 1st.** I look forward to ministering alongside Fr. Tommy and as a parish will have an opportunity to welcome him in July when he arrives.

And finally, in addition to Fr. Tommy, the Archbishop is giving us more priestly support with a weekend assistant. During my years at the seminary, I was blessed to get to know Fr. Peter Ryan, a Jesuit priest from the Maryland province who was ordained in 1987. With a doctorate in theology, he currently teaches moral theology at the seminary. He holds the Fr. Michael McGivney Chair in Life Ethics, which is one of the most significant positions for Pro-Life issues in the country, and also works closely with the Courage apostolate. **Fr. Ryan is an exceptional priest, and I look forward to his weekend service at our parish.** Upon receiving his assignment, Fr. Ryan texted me: "I'm delighted, and can't think of a better parish to be assigned!" As our parish and the universal church continue to be a witness to the Gospel of Life, I'm confident Fr. Ryan will be a trusted guide and devoted spiritual father.

As I mentioned earlier, change brings grief and that is natural as we recognize our deep connections to one another in and through love. And at the same time, gratitude moves us towards our profound connection to God, precisely through His love and providence. He is present, and truly is the Good Shepherd. I ask that we all join in prayer as a family of faith, thanking God for the priestly service of Fr. Anthony and Fr. Zaid, as well as prepare our hearts to welcome Fr. Tommy and Fr. Peter as they ready themselves for ministry here in July.

In His Peace,

Msgr. Todd Lajiness