

Dear Parish Family,

By the time you read this, I will have begun my medical leave. Although my surgery is not until Monday, I decided to take the weekend to enjoy with family before I am laid up for the next couple of months. As I have already explained, the surgery is somewhat involved and invasive and will require a fairly lengthy recovery period. After consultation with the diocese, I decided it was best to plan my return immediately after Christmas. Thank you for your support and prayers. I am truly blessed.

During my absence, I have made arrangements for the administration and pastoral care of the parish with the help of several priests and the assistance of the diocese. I have asked Fr. Kauth to oversee all administrative matters, while Fr. Bean will continue to provide pastoral care. Since it is not possible for another priest to be present during the week, I have decided to temporarily suspend the 8:30 a.m. morning Mass. For those of you who may be inconvenienced by this schedule change, please know that I am grateful for your sacrifice for the next couple of months. The Wednesday and weekend schedule will remain the same. Obviously, you will see a little more of Fr. Kauth. You will also see more of Fr. Paul McNulty. As some of you know, Fr. McNulty grew up in our parish. It will be a bit of a homecoming to have him around. I am also pleased to announce that Fr. McNulty will be taking up residence in the rectory. Currently, he serves as the full-time chaplain to Christ the King Catholic High School. No doubt the rectory will make for a much easier commute. I am most grateful to him for his willingness to help.

Finally, it is been on my mind for some time to write a personal note to you reflecting on my past six years here. St. Thomas Aquinas is now officially my longest assignment. Although this is not the opportune time for such a letter, I would nonetheless like to make a few brief comments. As you know, we have accomplished a great deal in the past six years. I am proud of and grateful for your willingness to share the responsibilities and risks that were needed to move the parish forward.

Regarding the more tangible accomplishments, we have added a new parish center, renovated the old office building, moved the Catholic Campus Ministry Center to our parish campus, rehabilitated the Family Life Center which now generates a rental income, updated our church restroom facilities and, most recently, completed a major sanctuary renovation. Regarding the more intangible accomplishments, we have focused a great deal on our devotional life and liturgical practices. Specifically, we have adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament every day of the week except Saturday. We have introduced candlelight processions in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary from May to October. In celebration of the completion of our Fatima devotion, we now have an annual World Feast that is evolving to become even bigger and better. We have invested in a sacred music program that allows us to experience the music proper to the Latin Rite, such as Gregorian chant and polyphony. We have introduced a more ancient form of the Mass on Wednesday nights. We have added special programs throughout the liturgical year such as the Rorate Mass in Advent, reflections before the Stations of the Cross in Lent, Orchestral and Requiem Masses and various other occasional devotions.

As you can see, our parish is not standing still. We have progressed at a steady pace and this will continue. This fall, it was my intention to begin programs and adult catechesis that would bring the people of the parish closer together. It is my firm belief that if you all could get to know one another as I have gotten to know you, there would be a great synergy through which the Holy Spirit could work even more powerfully. My thinking is simple; as God draws us closer to himself, we meet each other on the way. This communion binds us at the deepest levels. Through this communion, we become better, our efforts to evangelize greater, and our lives deeper with meaning. Because of my medical leave, I postponed these efforts. Rest assured, I will have plenty of time to think about the best way to achieve these goals when I return.

For the next few months you will be in good hands. As you know, I trust Fr. Kauth implicitly. Fr. Bean will continue his good pastoral work. Our excellent and experienced staff will maintain the daily operations. You will be in good hands.

Be assured of my prayers and I will see you soon.

Blessings,

Fr. Winslow