

Peace and blessings.

As many of you have heard, I will be changing parish assignments, starting July 1, 2022. There was a process that was in process when word started to spread of the possibility, raising many questions and concerns, even though it was not yet official. So, on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, I spoke about it in the homily at the 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Masses that I celebrated.

As so common throughout the Easter season, the first reading that day was from the Acts of the Apostles, which tells about the establishment and growth of the early Christian communities, often through missionary journeys. These missionary journeys were discerned through the movements of the Holy Spirit and in consultation with the community of disciples. So, it was a good parallel to my circumstances. The particular passage that day spoke of not resisting, but rather continuing and embracing the new paths, experiences, and opportunities ahead, trusting that the Lord is guiding and directing us according to His will and plan.

I also shared in the homilies about my experience in seminary. Through the Teaching Parish Program, seminarians are assigned to a parish for practical, “real world” experiences and interactions. In the five years that it was available to me in seminary, I was assigned to six different parishes... not because of me, or the parishes, but simply the changes that occurred as the program developed and to provide a variety of experiences. So I have become accustomed to “living out of a suitcase” and moving on with “holy curiosity” – an open mind to the possibilities that lie ahead.

I also spoke about the lack of vocations in Chicago. The day before, only one priest had been ordained for the entire Archdiocese of Chicago for 2022. Last year, we were eight. We are in a real and serious crisis of lack of vocations... but that’s a whole other topic.

The next day I received the call that my new assignment was official – though still “subject to change!” I also learned that, thankfully, there will be another Associate assigned to St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. That was a big concern... due to the lack of vocations, replacement priests are not always a certainty.

For example, Santa Maria del Popolo in Mundelein currently has a Pastor, and two Associate Pastors, but both Associates are being re-assigned as of July 1. The Parish would be left with just the Pastor, creating a great need. The opportunity to be assigned there was presented to me, and I accepted. It will provide the opportunity to expand and grow in Hispanic ministry, along with ministry with the English-speaking community.

Experiencing and living my first year of priesthood has been amazing, incredible, and, of course, unforgettable. Celebrating and participating in the Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Funerals, Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, and a Wedding, have been great blessings, and so very inspirational and fulfilling. The community of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity has been an integral part of this first year and I will carry the experiences, the memories, and the people, with me.

*Oremus pro invicem et pro omnibus* – “Let us pray for each other and for all.”

Please pray especially for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

God bless and protect you and yours, now and always,

Fr Christopher