



Did you know?

Did you know Fr. Matt's presence at St. Luke the Evangelist can be traced to a vacation he took twenty-five years ago?

Fr. Matt discovered Palm Harbor, Florida in 1993 while on vacation with relatives who were visiting family members in the area. He enjoyed the visit and the locale so much that he returned regularly over the course of the next eighteen years. Naturally, when it came time to retire, Florida was his top pick as a place to live, with St. Luke the Evangelist Church, being his first choice for a parish.

During his vacation stays, Fr. Matt would attend Mass at area churches, but always felt drawn to St. Luke the Evangelist, remarking on "a sense of peace and calm" he experienced while simply sitting in the pews. So, when Fr. Paul approached him in 2014 with the opportunity to assist the parish, he did not hesitate. He said he knew he was called to St. Luke and was more than happy to serve. After all, according to Fr. Matt, "he may have come to Florida to retire to some place warm, but he did not retire to stop working!"

As proof of his priestly work ethic, Fr. Matt created a "To Do List" immediately after retirement. He prayed for insight and direction as to the opportunities he should pursue saying, "He knows God always has a plan." It seems God's plan is to keep Fr. Matt busy, for in spite of ongoing health issues, he continues to expand his voluntary duties even after forty-five years of service as a priest.

Fr. Matt says he is "feels like he has time to be more of a priest now than when he was weighed down with the administrative duties of a Pastor." In addition to being a part of the liturgical celebrations at St. Luke the Evangelist, Fr. Matt particularly enjoys celebrating Mass with the children of the parish, visiting St. Luke's Early Childhood Center and Guardian Angels Grade School. He says Mass once a month at St. Peter the Apostle in Trinity, Florida, visits area nursing homes, is Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus at St. Luke the Evangelist and travels to Holiday, Florida to serve as Spiritual Director of the Lay Carmelites (of which he is a member) at St. Vincent De Paul.

At a time when Catholic parishes are impacted by the critical shortage of priests, the Church is fortunate to have retired clergy who are willing and able to offer their assistance. At St. Luke the Evangelist we are blessed to have retired Pastor, Fr. Matteo Rizzo assisting our Pastor and Deacons in serving the needs of our parish community. Thank you for your inspiring homilies, your love of God, your love of people, and your wonderful sense of humor. Long may you serve!

