

Letter from the Pastor

April 27, 2020

Dear Beloved St. Joseph Parishioners:

After much reflection and prayer (and with a lump in my throat), I have written a letter to Bishop Baker requesting his approval for my retirement. The Bishop approved my request and so I will retire at the end of June 2020. My last Sunday Mass' will occur on June 28th.

I am 80 years old and approaching the last decade of my life. You have had two pastors die here at St. Joseph and I do not want to be the third. I believe that I was sent here by the Holy Spirit to tend to the state of repair of all the buildings here at St. Joseph. Together, we have remodeled the Parish Hall & Chapel, put in a new commercial grade kitchen and modernized the restrooms. Together, we have remodeled the church sanctuary, lowering the Altar Platform, moved the choir to their own raised position in the congregation, and installed a modern sound system and LED lighting. Together, we have modified the classrooms in the school, put in modern individual heat pumps, installed LED lighting, and lowered the ceilings to 10 feet. In doing these changes on the buildings, we have lowered our utility (gas & electric) by 38%. Oh, did I mention leaks? We no longer have leaks in any of our buildings. Because of these prudent changes, we are operating in the black and our parish financial position is good.

Together, we are handling the Corona Virus scourge that is plaguing our Nation, our State, and our City. We are family and we are strong. Change is always difficult, for all of us. However, with God's help, we are still managing to keep in contact with each other using modern videoing techniques.

Yes, God has been good to us and we are thankful for His abundant blessings. I am excited to enter the next phase of my life. I plan to be an 'Emeritus' priest in the Birmingham Diocese. I plan to establish residence in Madison Al. There I will be close to the Interstate and close to family. As a Emeritus (pony express) priest, I can fill in for any priest in our diocese who is ill or on vacation and tend to the liturgical needs (Confessions and Mass) of his parishioners in his absence.

I am excited for St. Joseph, Florence also. We have come a long way together and we are family. I have been praying for all of you that you draw ever closer to God each day of your life. I am praying for your next pastor. May he be a more spiritual person than I and lead you into a greater spirituality than I have. I pray that our Daily Mass attendance increases beyond the capacity of our beautiful chapel. I wish we could have Perpetual Adoration in our chapel, as I had in my church in Illinois when I was growing up. I pray that our Sunday Liturgies be overflowing in people in the Main Church. Above all, I pray for each of you and your families; You have been outstanding in your love and support of me.

Be as good to your new Pastor as you have been to me. He will be different than I, but he will have gifts that I do not have. May God continue to bless you all.

Lastly, I have searched for the 'best time' to inform the St. Joseph family of my decision and have found that there is no best time. I wanted to announce it after Easter at Mass but due to the Health Restrictions we are not meeting in the church; therefore, I cannot announce it personally. I will send it out on email and face book and let 'word of mouth' work it from there. I apologize for not being able to reach everyone.

Yours' in Christ


Fr. Roy Runkle

Pastor, St. Joseph-Florence