

Reflection for the Final Mass at Divine Savior

I had written a fine reflection on today's readings. I was able to work into it the theme of our closing to form a new parish. When I was finished, I had a good talk but it was without any sentiment. I deemed that to downgrade today's event. We have closed already as a parish at the beginning of July and today we close as a worship site for our new and unnamed parish. Our three parish communities of Divine Savior, Our Lady Mother of the Church and St. Eugene are now one parish community. This is a fact that we can all accept. A glad fact too. So why am I sad?

I have been part of this community as your parish priest for four full years now. I have gotten to know many of you and you have gotten to know me. Some of you have been members of Divine Savior for many years in the six decades of the parish's life. Births, deaths, marriages, baptisms, first communions and fellowship have filled our lives. Now it will be over, here, for good. I am reminded of the Final Commendation I often use at funerals. Let me quote it with a little adaptation. "There is sadness in parting, but we take comfort in the hope that one day we shall see each other again and enjoy friendship." The context of the prayer's meaning is that the reunion would take place in the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns at the end of the age. Here, however, it can be next week at Our Lady Mother or at St. Eugene for mass.

There is still sadness for our closing for good. That's normal for there's always grief over loss. But we can never lose the gifts we've been for each other. I have been assigned to many parishes in the forty three years of my priest hood and the single year of my deaconate. Prior to my ordination, I had worked in several other parishes too. Saying goodbye one week and saying hello the next. I have been very gifted in the range of pastoral experiences and the opportunities to meet new people. In retrospect, these gifts have helped shape me into the man and priest I have become. One thing I learned, early on, when I faced nervousness and anxiety over being one who serves, preaches, teaches and celebrates our rituals. The congregation always supported me to do my best. You have wanted me to succeed. And if I have, it is because of your loving concern. You have been the wind beneath my wings as has the Holy Spirit. By the grace of God we have been together through these years. To this I say a profound thank you.

I am confident in you that all the gifts that we have been as Divine Savior will enrich the new parish's life. You are the greatest gift offered to build the new community. Our spirit can only enrich the lives of our fellow members. For in us, they will see Christ who is the heart of this parish. Christ goes with us now too and is already the heart of our unnamed community. Christ is in our midst as we move forward in faith. As a symbol of Christ's living presence at the heart of parish life, when mass is over I will remove the Eucharist from our tabernacle and carry it to St. Eugene (by car). Fr. Yanos will receive it at St. Eugene and will repose Jesus in the tabernacle there. I invite you to drive there, as well, to witness this solemn event and participate in a brief prayer service. And note that it is the same Jesus who is the heart of our new parish.

On a personal note, I have been having a painful attack of sciatica for the past several months. It keeps getting worse making it difficult to stand for prolonged periods or walk any great distance. I retire the first of January and have requested a medical leave before I retire, during which time I will seek treatment and therapy. Tuesday I will leave for a month-long vacation and I hope

upon my return to hear if the Cardinal has granted my request for a three month medical leave. Know that I pray for you all the time. Please pray for me.

May the Holy Spirit lead us on our journey to the Kingdom of God.

James D. Beath
September 4, 2022

I will take a month-long hiatus from my reflections while on vacation. This will be the last one for a while.