



St. Francis of Assisi Parish

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My Dear Parishioners,

I hope everyone is gearing-up for a relaxing and enjoyable summertime! We are so blessed to live in an area where the shore is just a short drive away and we have some great amusement parks and natural areas for hiking and camping, too. I love summer as well, but mine is going to be a little different this time around. I wanted to let you know I will be taking a brief sabbatical beginning after Father's Day Masses this weekend. I'm going to pack my car and drive out to the Midwest to seek some physical and mental help with anxiety, insomnia and drinking more than I'm proud of. I've had anxiety and insomnia since I was a little kid and I've always pushed through it; now that I am 43, it's starting to really wear me down. When that happens, it becomes too easy to turn to alcohol to help quell the anxiety and insomnia and thus a vicious cycle is created. I'm hoping this place will help me smash that cycle for good. I asked the archdiocese if I could begin a program after the kid's wrap-up from our school and our Religious Ed program and they granted my request, which I truly appreciate. Also, the Archdiocese allowed me to choose a program in the Midwest that I was comfortable with attending; that, too, I appreciate. St. Francis is a special parish and I want to make sure I can be the best priest possible before the eyes of God and all of you. While I feel a little bit defeated at the moment, I know this is the right thing to do and I am going to do it.

As you know, it's getting increasingly difficult to staff parishes due to the vocation shortage, so we are very blessed that Monsignor Angelo Citino is going to come to St. Francis to help "hold down the fort" while I am away. Monsignor Citino is retiring after years of service to Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in West Chester, and I know he is going to enjoy his time here at St. Francis. And, as always, we are grateful to the ongoing assistance of Fr. Hank McKee—couldn't do it without him. Also, at the end of July, Fr. Eugene is coming back over to be with us from Europe for most of August. Fr. Eugene was such a huge help when he was here last year and I know he'll be the same for this year too!

This wasn't an easy letter for me to write, but I do think that rumors people create are usually much worse than the truth. I just shared with you the truth because transparency and honesty are key. Things will work out in the big picture because we all know Who is ultimately in charge. While I am away, you will not be able to reach me, but be assured I will be praying for you and I ask that you keep me in your prayers.

Thanks for taking the time to read this and I want to share with you a more modern take on a more traditional prayer that I grew up saying:

I asked God to take my habit away, but God said no...it is not for Me to take away but for you to give up...

I asked God to grant me patience, but God said no...patience is a byproduct of tribulation...it isn't granted, it is earned...

I asked God to give me happiness, but God said no...I give you blessings...happiness is up to you...

I asked God to spare me pain, but God said no...suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to Me....

I asked God to make my spirit grow, but God said no...you must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful...

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life, but God said no...I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things.

Then I asked God to help me love others as much as He loves me, and God said, "Finally you get the idea."

Enjoy Summer!

In Christ,

Rev. Matthew J. Tralies

+ Fr. Matthew Tralies, Pastor