

October 13, 2021

From: Fr. Jerry Paulson

To: Staff and Parishioners of Jesus Our Living Water Area Faith Community (AFC)

I write this while sitting on my deck watching the yellow ash tree leaves raining down – it is autumn bordering on winter. Symbolically, the same season has come into my life – autumn bordering on winter. I am a true Minnesotan who thoroughly enjoys all the changes of the seasons of the year. I have also been abundantly blessed through my life’s seasons that I have passed through.

It is time to welcome late autumn changes in a positive and joyful way as I accept that it is the right time for me to fully retire on December 31, 2021. When I came to this AFC at the age of 67 in 2011, my intention was to do full-time ministry for 3 years and retire at 70, the normal retirement age for priests in the Diocese of New Ulm. Because this was a totally enjoyable assignment, because my health allowed it and because the priest shortage was upon us, I chose to continue to help out in ministry for 8 additional years. I do not regret a minute of my choice!

I have been able to get through the last couple of years due to the support of Fr. Steve, the hardworking staff, the incredible sacristans in our AFC and the innumerable volunteers who keep all of our parishes running smoothly – making the lives of your priests manageable and easier. I also have wonderful neighbors and other parishioners who help me with the parish house gardens, outdoor work and other projects as needed.

But health and aging issues are taking their toll on my body, especially chronic back pain that makes weekend liturgies and funerals increasingly more difficult for me. Standing and walking are limited and steps are not always easy. Neuropathy in my feet affects my balance. My voice is tired and it is getting harder to project. Even though I have “a little gas left in my tank,” I am choosing retirement while I am still “on top of my game.”

However, as I give up being “gainfully employed,” I joyfully join the ranks as a volunteer. Like other volunteers who give what they can depending on their skills, time and talents, I will do the same. For the privilege of being able to remain living in the OLOL parish house, on the reverse side is a list of volunteer ministries/tasks that Fr. Steve and I have agreed on as long as he is pastor. They give me a purpose in life and a reason to get up in the morning in retirement. I am blessed in the ability to offer my help and in having it welcomed. When a new pastor is assigned, these tasks would have to be renegotiated.

A ton of thanks and blessings to everyone for your love, support and helpfulness during these last ten years. “It’s been a good run!” I embrace this new season in my life. Rather than having a retirement party in the dead of winter, I would like to celebrate with you sometime in June.

Fr. Steve and I have agreed on the following ministries/tasks to be done as a volunteer beginning January 1, 2022 and as my health permits.

- 1. Offer daily Mass at OLOL on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week. Fr. Steve will celebrate the daily Mass on Tuesday. If there is a funeral, the daily Mass will be canceled. When Glen Oaks reopens to the public, I will be offering a Mass at the nursing home.***
- 2. Celebrate Masses/Services at OLOL during various holydays (Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, etc.) as requested by the pastor.***
- 3. Set-up the liturgical books and sanctuary for the weekend Masses.***
- 4. Assist with the Communal Anointing of the Sick Mass at St. Mary's in November.***
- 5. Assist with hearing private confessions during Advent and Lent at OLOL as requested by the pastor.***
- 6. Be available to cover emergencies, vacation/other absences when the pastor or associate pastor need help.***
- 7. Provide input on the needs of the physical plant, grounds and cemetery at OLOL to the pastor and/or administrator.***
- 8. Retrieve and sort the mail.***
- 9. Open and lock the facility as needed.***
- 10. Line up soundboard personnel for weddings and funerals and schedule a sacristan to set-up and assist at funerals.***
- 11. Assist with First Friday Communion calls for shut-ins.***
- 12. Continue as "chaplain" of Catholic United Financial.***
- 13. Facilitate/direct the OLOL liturgical environment changes for the different seasons.***
- 14. Be open and willing to help out in other ways throughout the year as requested by the pastor.***