

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week I told you that I will be transferred from our lovely parish as of August 1, 2022. On that date, I will assume the pastorate of St. John Vianney Church in Colonia, New Jersey.

So many thoughts fill my mind as I write these words. I have enjoyed being a part of St. Philip and St. James Church these past 13 years. This community has welcomed me and supported me in so many ways, especially with your prayers. I have repeatedly told my family and friends, and many of you, that I never enjoyed a parish as much as I have enjoyed this one.

While it is always hard to say good bye, there are good reasons for priests to be transferred after some years in an assignment. Remember that pastors in our diocese are assigned for terms of six years. I have completed two such terms, and another year beyond that, in this parish.

When a priest is in an assignment for so many years, his strengths have been a blessing to the parish for all that time. But, as we all know, nobody is good at everything. A new pastor will bring his unique blessings and gifts to the parish with him, and these will benefit the parish in new ways.

Sports fans may know the name Theo Epstein. He is one of the most respected general managers in baseball. He earned this respect by building both the Red Sox and Cubs teams that ended championship droughts of 86 and 108 years, respectively.

Asked why he moved on to other teams after achieving such success, Epstein said that he believed there was what he called 'about a ten - year expiration date' on such positions. By this he meant that, over time, one can get stale or stagnant in a certain position. Eventually, it's time for a new person to bring new insight and gifts to the job.

While I don't feel stale or stagnant, and I certainly hope you don't feel that I've become that way, either, I can easily see the truth in Epstein's position. This is why our diocese has terms for pastors - a policy with which I wholeheartedly agree.

Over the next month, I will work with you to ensure a smooth transition for St. Philip and St. James Parish. Among other things, I will print some suggestions that I hope will help you make this time of transition a real blessing for our parish and each of her members. It is my fervent hope that you will welcome your new pastor as enthusiastically as you welcomed me 13 years ago.

Perhaps one way to do this is to start praying a Hail Mary for him every day. I know how much your prayers have meant to me, and know they will mean a great deal to him, too.

In the meantime, know that I am here for you. Feel free to give me a call with any questions you may have. Most of all, know that I am happy to serve as your pastor and priest until August 1st.

Faithfully,

Fr. John