

11/08/16

Parish Family,

Our Diocese of Wichita is blessed with many vocations (50 seminarians) and within 2 years we will have 18 new priests. So what is the bishop to do with extra priests? Last year and this year the bishop asked the priests to consider offering assistance outside of the diocese. It's likened to back in the 1800's when Ireland had too many priests and sent them out to various countries. Every year the bishop sends all priests a form called the Priest Assessment Form, which asks what the priest may be interested in doing in the future: Institution Ministry such as Hospital, Catholic High School, Catholic University or obtaining further Education such as to become a Canon Lawyer, Liturgical Degree, or learn Spanish. It asks if the priest wants to be in a suburban parish or rural parish, and/or a parish with or without a school, etc... In January, when I filled out the form, I made it known I was willing to help out in another diocese as a chaplain of a hospital. Each priest takes a vow of obedience to the bishop and so whatever the bishop asks of the priest, the priest will do.

Earlier this week, the Bishop asked me to meet with him. When we met he said, *"Father Edmond, the Diocese of Tulsa, sent me a letter asking for a priest to serve as a chaplain in their hospital. Are you interested?"*

St. Francis Xavier Hospital in Tulsa has 1,112 beds. Also directly next to the hospital is a Children's Hospital and a Heart Hospital. The hospital has 3 priest chaplains, and 1 of the 3 priests is no longer able to continue due to health. The two priests are extremely busy and need help.

Although I trusted the bishop's care for the people of Sacred Heart, I asked him about what will happen to the people of Sacred Heart, whom I have grown to know and love. I wanted to be sure our parish would still have daily Mass, and that the Adoration Chapel would continue, the homebound would still have Holy Communion regularly, a priest would be here for PSR and RCIA etc...

When I go to Tulsa, he assured me a priest will reside at Sacred Heart, but will be what's called a priest administrator. A priest administrator can do most everything a pastor can do, but he can't make important pastoral changes or major financial decisions. The reason why the bishop makes a priest an Administrator is to be sure that no changes are made at a parish so as to keep things continuing as they were when the last pastor leaves. An Administrator for example can't discontinue the Adoration Chapel, nor can he decide to take on a building project or start a new parish wide program. Pastors on the other hand can change or initiate most anything in their parish.

Back when I was the Associate Pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Wichita in 2008, Msgr. James Conly was pastor of Blessed Sacrament. He was named auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Denver and Bishop Jackels asked me to become the Administrator of Blessed Sacrament. Within a few weeks, Msgr. Conly had left, and there I was holding down the fort. At that time, Bishop Jackels told me, *"You are to offer all the sacraments and be sure the people are provided for pastorally, but you can't make any changes."* Back then there was no way I even thought about making changes, I had only been ordained for 3 ½ years. A few months later, Blessed Sacrament received their new pastor, Fr. Sean McKnight, and I became pastor of two parishes St. Rose of Lima in Council Grove and St. Anthony in Strong City.

Bishop Kemme has chosen to not publically name the Priest Administrator at this time. He did tell me the name of the priest. On occasion, a Bishop may choose to not publically name a priest for an assignment until a later date, perhaps because the priest is unable to immediately tell those whom he is serving due to being away from his assignment on vacation or for some other reason.

I will leave in early January and at that same time the Priest Administrator will come to Sacred Heart, then in May of 2017, the Bishop will name the new pastor of Sacred Heart.

I have made so many dear friends here at Sacred Heart and have seen how by God's grace and His gifts, we as a parish family can accomplish much together. Many of the things we have accomplished have not been my idea: the Church Lights, the Stained Glass Windows, the Library, Paving the Parking Lot, the Donation of the Two Houses, etc...

I believe the greatest blessing to our parish has been the Adoration Chapel. MANY mornings when I wake up I tell Jesus, *"Lord I am so proud of the people of Sacred Heart for keeping the Adoration Chapel going for three years. I am especially thankful for all those who faithfully come in the middle of the night to spend an hour with you in Eucharistic Adoration."*

I would like to tell you a brief little story. About a week ago, one of the parishioners called me and I immediately noticed she wasn't herself. She was very confused. She is someone who faithfully comes at night to pray a Holy Hour. I was concerned for her health and so went to the chapel to pray. As I was reading from the book "Office of Readings", the Lord kept bugging me to call her husband and tell him that I thought she needed to go to the hospital. The thoughts would not leave, until I finally responded. I ended up calling her husband and told him that I thought she needed to go to the hospital. I came to her home and anointed her and he took her to the Emergency Room. The doctor told her that if she had waited another day or two, she would have wound up in Intensive Care. It was then I realized, Jesus was looking out after His lamb and used me to get her the help she needed. It was obvious to me Jesus cherishes that time when she comes before Him in the middle of the night and wanted to be sure she was taken care of. How beautiful and moving that the Lord made sure she was taken care of and how humbling it was for me, that he used me to help her.

Stewardship has been a tremendous blessing. So many of you have recognized your God given gifts and have been willing to share them out of love of God and neighbor. Thank you for responding as faithful disciples of Jesus!

It's hard to leave and to begin something new, especially in a place where I don't know anyone. But neither did St. Paul when he went throughout the land proclaiming Jesus. There are new friends to be made and new co-workers in the field of the harvest. New people to help get to heaven.

While I am looking forward to serving the patients and staff of the three hospitals, I am leaving behind a portion of my heart.

Sacred Heart is the *"Little Church with a Big Heart"* and that's because the many hearts when united together make up a Big Heart, in imitation of the Biggest Heart, the Heart of Jesus.

Please keep me in your prayers, and let us pray for each other and for your new priest who will be coming. And pray that you will receive the new pastor which will be most beneficial to the Sacred Heart family.

Don't be afraid, little flock. The Lord is taking care of you. He will never abandon you because His Heart is beating for love of you! Fr. Edmond Kline, pastor