

## Letter to Parishioners

When Catherine and I were newly married, we lived in a small house with a bay window in the living room. Just outside the bay window was a small shrub. The first spring we were there a pair of cardinals built a nest in which they laid 5 eggs. We eagerly watched and anticipated the births of the baby birds. All 5 eggs hatched and we watched both parent birds busily feeding the newborns. In less than two weeks the newborns had flown the nest and did not return. I was both disappointed at their being gone so soon and in awe of the sharing of their birth experience.

This pandemic has been hard in many ways. One way Catherine and I have found it difficult has been the inability to visit family, but most intensely we have missed visiting either of our two daughters. Catherine and I have talked often about where we might end up living in retirement. We have said that we wanted to live close to wherever our daughters were living, hopefully close to each other. Our youngest daughter lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Our oldest daughter got married May 8, in Portland, Oregon. However, she and her husband will be moving to Minneapolis this summer.

Which brings me to this ambivalent announcement. In July this summer Catherine and I will be moving to Minneapolis. We long to see and be near our daughters. When we announced that we would be moving, our youngest daughter said, “We can have Sunday dinners together like we did when we were all living together.” We’ll see if our newly married daughter and her husband want to make this a weekly experience, but after not seeing them in such a long time, it is with great anticipation that we look forward to opportunities to be with them. The opposing feeling – we have greatly enjoyed and been blessed by living and working in the Scranton diocese. My time as Parish Life Coordinator to St. Elizabeth and St. Rita parishes feels a bit like my experience of watching the Cardinal family in the shrub outside our window. This 5-year period has seemed to fly by. I have had the pleasure of working with so many fine people in both parishes. I have been blessed by this experience. And I will miss being present to the many great parishioners who not only attend Mass regularly, but are part of the activities that sustain parish life.

I am grateful to Nicki Pachuki who has served as the DRE at St. Elizabeth the entire time I have been here and to the catechists who have nurtured the faith of young people at the parish. I am grateful to Kathy Fossetta who served in that role at St. Rita and to the people who served as catechists there. I am grateful to the Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors at both parishes who have served unselfishly. I am grateful to those who planned and performed for the liturgies at both parishes. I have been blessed by those who have participated in the bible studies and other adult faith formation opportunities offered at both parishes. I am grateful to Jeanie Stack and MT Yurko who staffed the parish office at St. Elizabeth the first 3 years at St Elizabeth and to Amanda Proch and Mer

Rish have been there the past two years. And Amanda has served in the parish office at St. Rita ever since I received the appointment there. Thank you(s) to Msgr Tressler, Fr Kevin Mulhern and Fr. Fred Riegler who have served as Sacramental Ministers at St Rita, and to Fr. Maloney who has served in that role the entire time at St. Elizabeth and St. Mark. Thank you to all who served on the Pastoral Councils at both parishes who made the forming of the Parish Pastoral Mission plans a rewarding experience. Thank you also to those who served on the finance councils at both parishes, without whose assistance I would have felt lost in the financial dealings and repairs needed for all three churches. Thank you to Ronnie Petro who set up for the Masses at St. Mark Church. Thank you to Jeanne Tierney who volunteered to help with the office at St. Rita. Thank you to all those who have helped to clean and decorate St. Mark, St. Elizabeth and St. Rita churches so that they have remained beautiful and inviting spaces. Thank you to all those at both parishes who have helped livestream Masses and sanitize the churches during the pandemic. Thank you to all those who have helped take care of the grounds, rectories and parish offices at both parishes. Thank you to the Guild, the Knights of Columbus and the Youth Group at St. Elizabeth Parish and to those who have coordinated those groups which helped build parish life at the Parish. Thank you to the Pierogi ladies at St. Rita who helped build parish life there. A special thank you to Alan Hynes at St. Rita and Marcia Boris at St. Elizabeth who help out in multiple areas in each parish. There are many additional individuals to whom I owe a great deal of appreciation, but far too numerous to name in this letter.

And thank you to all of you who have attended St. Elizabeth and St. Rita parishes. I have been involved in church ministry since 1985. Being a parish life coordinator has allowed me to experience the broadest depth of parish life in all those years. Thank you to both parishes for allowing a non-priest to take the role of coordinating parish life. With the help of the pastoral and finance councils at both parishes, hopefully both parishes are in pretty good shape for whoever takes over the role of pastor or parish life coordinator.

Pennsylvania topography is much different than Kansas, but the people aren't that much different. Catherine and I have been blessed to be able minister in Pennsylvania. I will miss you and being a part of the church life here.

Blessings,

Tony Butel