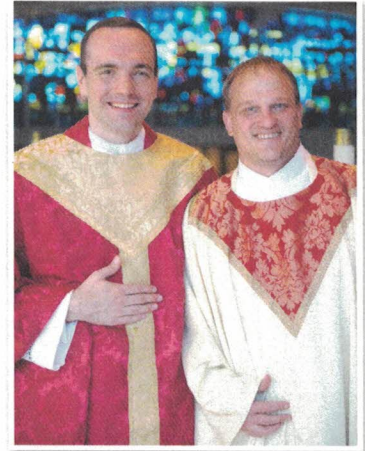


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J. M. J.

29-30 June 2024
Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Friends,

As my time at our beloved Saint Cathrine of Siena Parish draws to a close, I wanted to write to you and express my gratitude for the gift that this assignment has been for me. In a certain sense, these past two years flew! However, in another sense, it has been a time in which I saw God slowly molding me into the priest He has called me to be. I will always treasure my first assignment here, where I experienced many firsts and much grace.



As a seminarian, I heard it said that the life of a priest is *learned* at the Altar. This sacred place, the center of a parish family's life, is where the priest celebrates the mysteries of our faith, where "my Sacrifice and yours" is offered in worship to the Father. God makes Himself known to us at the Altar. As I look back on these first two years, I see how true this is. At the Altar of Sacrifice in Saint Catharine Church and in Saint Mary Church, I learned how the Mass would become the center of my life in a new way.

From this place, I also came to encounter you and your families as a spiritual father. "Father" was the name given to me at Ordination – and this was the first parish family to call me by that name. It is a daily reminder of the clarion call for every priest to sacrifice, humble service, and virtue. I am grateful for the ways you formed to better understand and "grow into" this essential identity as a priest. To say the least, I am excited for Father JV to begin his first assignment with you. He will receive the same welcome, love, and care that you provided me when I arrived here as a newly ordained Parochial Vicar.

Finally, I want to express to you my appreciation for our Pastor, Father Brian Miller. From the very beginning, Father Miller showed me what parish priestly life looks like. In these last two years, I have deeply admired his down-to-earth leadership, his love for Sacred Scripture, and his dedication to the spiritual life. Many days, I sought him for advice about priestly life, ministry in high school, and the balance of responsibilities. He has been a mentor and a friend, and I will miss learning from him and working alongside him.

To say the least, I will miss you. It has been an honor to serve you and your families here. With a grateful heart, I promise my prayers for you. Please keep me in yours as I serve the families of Saint Ignatius Parish and Berks Catholic High School. May we always remain close to Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and to His Mother – whose tender care is our strength.

*Saint Mary, pray for us.
Saint Catharine of Siena, pray for us.
Saint Ignatius of Loyola, pray for us.*

Sincerely yours in Christ,