



Dear Parishioners,

This weekend, I will be celebrating my farewell Mass at St. Matthew's. It is a very special opportunity for me to thank God, our beloved pastor Fr. John McCartney, Fr. Lawrence Chadwick, our Deacons, and all the parish staff. But, most especially, it is an opportunity for me to thank all of you, my dear friends, for these three wonderful years I have been given to serve as a priest in our beloved parish of St. Matthew's.

What is it that I am most grateful for?

I am most grateful for the way you welcomed me here. Since my first day, I have felt your appreciation, love, prayers and support. I am grateful because you allowed me to serve you with all my abilities. In serving you, and in loving this parish, I have received blessing after blessing. During this time with you, I have matured in my spiritual life, and have grown in my love for God and His Church. Every time I have seen my name on the "St. Matthew's Priests' Duty Roster," I have had a great sense of joy, knowing that I was called to give you what I have which is most precious: Jesus in the Sacraments.

Let me say it simply: I owe you a great deal. In my new assignments (for which I am very grateful to Bishop Murphy) I will take you with me. Every time I have to speak to the students and young people, I will have you in the back of my mind. In spending time with them, and in growing together with them in the love of God, I will be thinking of you, their parents, grandparents and peers. When I am called to minister to people in difficult times, I am confident that your prayers will assist me. My assignment at St. Matthew's may end here, but not our friendship.

My parents and family have asked me to express their gratitude to you for all you have done for me. I have spoken of them often to you, and have spoken of you so many times to them, they feel they know you. Now they want to thank you all for the love you have shown me.

As I leave St. Matthew's, I have one more favor to ask you: Please pray for vocations to the priesthood. We all know how precious priests are, and how important is the work that they do. How difficult it is today for young men to hear and to answer God's call to the priesthood! But together, if we unite in hope and in prayers, we know that God will not delay to send us the priests we so desperately need.

In gratitude to all of you,
and asking God's abundant blessings upon you,

Fr. Irinel