



Priests of the Sacred Heart

Provincialate Offices, United States Province
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January 1, 2012

My brothers and sisters, Parishioners of Queen of Peace Parish,

The beginning of a new year is often the time to begin new things. I and my Provincial Council have asked Fr. Terry Langley, SCJ, to accept the position of Provincial Secretary of the United States Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. I am grateful that he has accepted this assignment and will begin his new responsibilities on February 1, 2012. This assignment necessitates his move to Hales Corners, Wisconsin.

I am sure that you join me in thanking Fr. Terry for his pastoral leadership during the past six years. You might remember that Fr. Terry first came to Queen of Peace to assist the parish during the illness of Fr. John Young, SCJ. After Fr. John's death in October, 2005, Fr. Terry was asked by the province and he accepted the responsibilities as your pastor.

Queen of Peace Parish enjoys a long history and was one of the first missions established by the SCJs in northern Mississippi. Mass was initially celebrated in homes and in the 1970s, after celebrating Mass in a dance studio and in a former café, the first Queen of Peace Church was built on Sandidge Road. In 1983, you were established as a parish, and in 1998, your present facilities were built. The last 60+ years have seen much growth and development in your faith community. As a parish, you give thanks to God for the blessings that you have received – and for the blessings your parish has been for Olive Branch, Byhalia and the surrounding communities.

For more than four years now, we have used a different model of pastoral leadership for the parish cluster of Holy Spirit/Hernando, Good Shepherd/Robinsonville, St. Gregory/Senatobia and Christ the King/Southaven. Rather than having a single priest as pastor in one or more parishes, we have developed a pastoral team which is responsible for a cluster of parishes.

With the consent of Bishop Joseph Latino, the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, Queen of Peace Parish in Olive Branch will be added to this cluster as of February 1, 2012. The pastoral team includes Fr. Bob Tucker, SCJ, who will serve as the moderator of the team, Fr. Duy Nguyen, SCJ, Fr. Greg Schill, SCJ, Fr. Greg Speck, SCJ, and Sr. Emily Morgan, SM.

Queen of Peace Parish will continue to be a canonical parish, separate from the other four parishes. Like them, it will retain its own parish finance committee and finances, pastoral council, religious education program, parish committees and organizations, as well as its own staff.

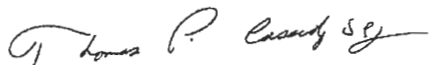
I know that parishes would prefer to have their "own" pastor. A pastoral team responsible for a cluster of parishes is the approach that we have used with much success in South Dakota and southern Texas for more than 25 years. But any transition is not without some hiccups and bumps in the road. But, in the long run, I think you will experience the pastoral team approach to be a very positive experience. It will build upon some of the experiences that you have already had.

I am sure that you have many questions about what this means on a practical, day-to-day level. Although it is Fr. Bob Tucker, SCJ, and the rest of the pastoral team who will need to answer your specific questions, I am confident in saying that – because the pastoral team includes four priests and additional professional pastoral staff – the availability of pastoral care will increase, not decrease.

This year marks 70 years of service by the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart in northern Mississippi. We are proud of the growth of our parishes in DeSoto, Tunica, Tate, Marshall and Benton Counties. We are also proud of the education, social service and housing ministries that have been developed with the assistance of religious women from a variety of communities and dedicated men and women of faith. Much good is happening in northern Mississippi in the name of the Catholic Church.

Be assured of my prayers for you and the pastoral team as you continue to deepen your faith. May the Word of God and the Eucharist we share nourish our hearts and souls and sustain us for God's service.

Sincerely yours in the Heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Cassidy, SCJ". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ
Provincial Superior
Priests of the Sacred Heart