

St. Joseph-on-Carrollton Manor

5843 Manor Woods Road/P. O. Box 33

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Peace of Christ, dear parishioners and friends,

Next month, on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, I will begin a sabbatical of three months away for a journey of study, reflection, and discernment. It is meaningful that I depart on Epiphany, which begins with the appearance of a star and includes the journey of the three wise men. My journey to this sabbatical began with the call of Christ. This is how it happened...

Last year, in his pastoral letter "A Light Brightly Visible," Archbishop Lori wrote about the reawakening of the mission of the Church, the mission of Evangelization. Simply put, we have been called to proclaim the "Good News" that "Jesus is Lord!" Our Archbishop's words inspired me to study and pray, and my understanding of the mission of the Church has deepened. It has been exciting!

The call of Christ came as I realized that to share in the ministry of Evangelization, I need to first be evangelized myself. You may think that a priest doesn't need to be evangelized, but my friends, as followers of Christ, each and every one of us must! And so it is time for a transformative spiritual journey to a renewed relationship with the heart and soul of my life, Jesus Christ. I also will be discerning a deeper sense of my experience of priesthood.

While I am on my journey, I invite you to design and plan your own "sabbatical" journey. Dive deeply into your heart and seek the presence and the person of Jesus and His abundant love for you! If you truly empty yourself of all the busyness and distractions of life, Jesus will come and fill you with His peace and love. And I urge you to be open to new approaches to this divine Love!

It is normal to feel hesitant or too tired or to say that you just don't want to bother. Don't be afraid to take the risk! And be encouraged that many of your fellow parishioners and our parish staff will gladly share this journey with you. Search out books of reflection, or join our small faith sharing groups and prayer groups. Seek to answer for yourself the question of the holy Magi: "Where is He? We have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

It is no small coincidence that my sabbatical will begin on the Solemnity of the Epiphany. You may have heard me recite on Epiphany the poem by T.S. Elliot, "The Journey of Magi." The poem's message is what my sabbatical is all about! Humbly searching and looking for the light, afraid to leave the comfortable and the familiar. Will I find what I am looking for? Will I be disappointed? Will the experience challenge me? What will change? What must change?

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These are just some of the questions we all must ask as we seek a closer relationship with Christ on this Journey of Faith. For a road map, we can look to the Gospels, and the writings of the early Church fathers and mothers, as well as the spiritual writers of today.

Jesus is at the heart of the life of the Church, living by His Spirit in our hearts. Our relationship with Jesus gives meaning and purpose to our involvement in ministries and service. Most importantly, when we center our lives in this relationship, each of us is fulfilled and ready to share the “Good News” with others in our lives.

While I’m away, Fr. Kevin Farmer, pastor of St. John’s in Frederick, will serve as Temporary Administrator for our parish. Archbishop Lori appointed him to this role, and he will oversee the fulfillment of our Mission and Vision statements. He’ll be supported by our very capable staff and parishioners who will carry on our ministries and services. I am very grateful to them all.

Fr. Leo and Deacon Greg will continue the pastoral ministry and spiritual care of our parish family. Greg Gondeck and the Mission Advisory Council, filled with God's Spirit, will continue to work with our ministries to focus our community on our mission and the call “to make disciples.” James Mannarino and our dedicated parish staff will continue to support and carry out the programs and services vital to the life of the parish.

As we journey together, although there will be distance between us, my love and care for you will continue. You will be in my prayers and my thoughts. And so we go forth, joining John the Baptist and his followers in their quest to find out about Jesus when they ask, “Are you the one who is to come?”

May God bless your journey and mine, and may peace be with all of you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Lawrence Frazier". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fr. Lawrence Frazier

PS Attached to this letter is a short list of resources that may help you as you begin this journey with me