

Dear St. Agnes Parishioner,

At the stroke of midnight following our parish's observance of the Feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, I will step down from my two-fold office as pastor of St. Agnes Parish and superintendent of the St. Agnes Schools. At that precise moment Father John Ubel will become the new pastor of St. Agnes Parish and will undertake the supervision of our parish program of religious and academic instruction.

What prompts me to this action is my age – on June 13<sup>th</sup> I will have completed the seventy-eighth year of my life – with an attendant decline in the energy that I can bring to the discharging of my duties here. This is a large parish, and its needs – instructional, sacramental and administrative – are demanding, and though I can honestly say that over the past five years I have tried very hard to meet those needs, I am also aware that I no longer have what it takes to ensure that in the future those needs will be adequately met. Accordingly I have asked the Archbishop for permission to step aside so that a younger and more energetic priest can assume the pastorate here. The Archbishop has acceded to my request.

It was with reluctance that I made this decision. To say good-bye to the solemnity and inspiring reverence of our liturgies, enhanced at our High Masses by glorious music, is difficult, and I will greatly miss our virtual army of altar-servers who carry out their duties with such devotion and *panache*. I think I can see in not a few of them the stirrings of a vocation to the priesthood. And I will recall with special fondness the many kindnesses that so many of you have shown to me during the five years of my pastorate here. I will remember you at the altar.

Let me take this occasion to express my hearty thanks to the president of the St. Agnes Schools, Jeff Brengman. He and I stood together as we strove to rebuild a high school that had been shaken to its foundations during the traumatic school year of 2001-2002. The impressive success that I think has been achieved is first and foremost *his* achievement. We are all in his debt. I herewith offer my thanks and the thanks of our parish and of our students to Jeff Brengman!

The Archbishop is giving you a wonderful new pastor in the person of my friend and former student, Father John Ubel. Ordained in 1989, Father Ubel is one of the most zealous and intelligent priests in the archdiocese. After ordination he served for two years as associate pastor at St. Joseph's Parish in West St. Paul and for six years thereafter as chaplain and teacher of religion at St. Thomas Academy. Subsequently he was archdiocesan co-director of vocations (with Father Stan Mader) for four years. He was then invited to teach courses in spirituality and liturgy at the St. Paul Seminary and in the Deacon Formation program. During the interval between Bishop Fred Campbell's leaving his post as the seminary's Rector to assume the governance of the diocese of Columbus, Ohio and the installation of Monsignor Aloysius Callaghan as the seminary's new Rector Ordinarius Father Ubel served for six months as the St. Paul Seminary's Interim Rector. He has spent the past year at the Gregorian University in Rome, studying the spirituality of the Fathers of the Early Church.

Given his youth, his personality, his strong faith, and his extensive experience as a teacher, he should relate exceptionally well to the students in our school, and as a son of Nativity Parish in St. Paul he should relate very well to another important Catholic school that over the years has sent some excellent students to our high school. Father Ubel's parents, still residing in Nativity Parish, are Dr. and Mrs. Frank Ubel.

Father Ubel is no stranger to St. Agnes Parish. Last year he was our high school's commencement speaker; from time to time he has attended our Sunday High Masses, and he has occasionally spoken

from our pulpit, and he has frequently helped us with confessions. I know that you will give him the enthusiastic welcome that he deserves as a hard-working priest whose agenda is to maintain St. Agnes Parish's grand traditions. He tells me that the motto that I chose when I came to you, on July the second, 2001, as your new pastor will be his, too: "Steady as she goes!"

After more than fourteen years of extraordinary service to St. Agnes Parish Father Altier is being entrusted with a new apostolate; he will serve as chaplain to Regina Hospital in Hastings. I cannot say enough in praise of Father Altier's tireless zeal. A confessor to many from all over the Metro region, he has also been extremely successful as a lecturer and preacher on all aspects of Catholic teaching, dogmatic and moral. His converts are numerous, as are those who have come to him for spiritual direction. He has taught the Christian Marriage course to the seniors in our high school for many years and has prepared many couples over the years for their marriage in our church. Faithful in bringing Holy Communion each week to many of our shut-ins, he offers one of the earliest Masses in the archdiocese, Monday through Friday, at 6:00 a.m. I will miss him both as a friend and as a generous collaborator. In his new assignment as a hospital chaplain he will bring to souls plunged into situations that can easily evoke a reassessment of the direction of their lives a fatherly guidance, compassion and forgiveness. The prayers of his legion of admirers will follow him in his new work for God.

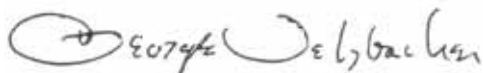
Coming to St. Agnes Parish as the new *associate* pastor is a wonderful young priest whom you know well. It was just a year ago that he offered his First Solemn High Mass at our high altar: Father Randall Kasel. Like his younger brother Gary (who is currently completing the second of the four years of theological study that are required for ordination to the priesthood) Father Randall had been drawn to our parish as a young adult for the very same reasons that have appealed to so many another young adult: a liturgy impressive both for its beauty and for its reverence accompanied by a straight-out presentation of the teaching of the Church with nothing held back. Like Father Ubel Father Kasel is also committed to maintaining the distinctive characteristics of our parish. And again like Father Ubel Father Kasel is a licensed professional teacher, all of which means that they should work very well together.

In conclusion may I say that, though I no longer feel able to meet the demands of so large a parish as this, I believe that I can still summon energy sufficient to serve a smaller parish. Given the current limited number of priests, it seems to me that I would be shirking my duty were I completely to withdraw from active service at this time. The Archbishop accordingly has assigned me to the pastorate of a parish that I have served in years past from time to time: St. John's Parish on the East Side of St. Paul. After a four months' sabbatical I will report for duty there on October the fifteenth of this current year.

In the coming weeks I will do all that I can to assist in providing a smooth transition. May I ask for your prayers, even as I know that you will be keeping Father Altier, Father Ubel and Father Kasel in your prayers as well, as we prepare, each of us, to take up our new assignments. Please accept my humble thanks for your loyal collaboration during these past five years as we strove together to do what we could to extend Christ's Kingdom on Earth.

God bless you all!

Gratefully,  
In Christ our Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Father Welzbacher".

Father Welzbacher