

A couple of weeks ago, some representatives from our ACC, including Dcn Randy, Fr Nathaniel and myself, attended an important meeting in St Cloud. We had a conversation with the diocesan committee that is assisting the Bishop in the restructuring of the diocese. The need of restructuring parishes in the Diocese of St Cloud has been initiated mainly by our shortage of priests. The number of active priests will continue to decline within the next decade, as the number of newly ordained will not keep up with the number of retirees. Unfortunately, our ACC will also suffer the impact of this, as they are projecting to only have 1 priest for our faith communities. The diocesan committee does NOT know when exactly there will be only one priest available to serve our faith communities of Sacred Heart in Dent, Holy Cross in Butler, St Lawrence in Rush Lake and St Henry's in Perham. I don't know when this will happen either but I have a feeling that it could happen when Fr Nathaniel receives his next assignment.

In an ideal world, each church would have a priest. The Diocese of St. Cloud would have at least 131 priests to take care of the 131 parishes that make up our Diocese. Unfortunately, we have a little over 50 active priests and it could go down to 40 within the next 7-10 years. Less priests means fewer Masses since each one of us can only do so much. In our ACC, one priest will say 7 Masses a week instead of the 14 Masses we are used to (4 weekday Masses and 3 weekend Masses). This number of Masses is what most priests in America generally do. Important to note that Church Law limits the number of Masses a priest offers daily to keep him from burnout.

I think it's important to prepare the best we can for the future changes and it would be amazing if they never get to happen; but the truth is that we don't have all the priests we need. Sadly, many other dioceses are

facing this same challenge. The solution is to pray for more vocations and to promote them in our families. Priests come from families like yours! This trend can be reversed!

In the meantime, let us support each other in prayer and ask for the gift of understanding and strength. This is the Church of God and God will always be with His Church. May the Lord Jesus bless you and keep you in His care!

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On a different note, several parishioners have expressed to me the desire to help immigrants from our communities that may be struggling financially because they are afraid to go to work. I do know a few that are in that situation and assisting them at this time of need has been in my heart also. Our faith impels us to be in solidarity with our neighbors and the Beatitudes, which is the Gospel reading of this 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time describes what makes us blessed. I'd like to give you the opportunity to donate toward this current need. You can drop your donation in an envelope with the word "Immigrant" on it. The Church will use the funds to help local immigrant families with utility expenses. I will make sure it gets to the families I know. Thank you for your prayerful support and concern for those in need.

Fr. Daniel Goanchez