

March 21, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mary,

Early Wednesday morning, on a day already made difficult by the impact of the coronavirus epidemic on our Church community, I received with great sadness the news of the death of Fr. Rick Eldred, your pastor and my fellow priest. As the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy, I am principally writing you today on behalf of Archbishop Thompson and the community of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to express our condolences and deep sympathy in this time of loss. Indeed, we share your grief at this difficult time. Fr. Rick's death has come as a great shock to us. Over the past several days I have heard from a number of our priests expressing their own surprise and sadness.

Along with feelings of loss and sadness, of course, lies uncertainty about the future. Aware of this, I would like to share what I know as we move forward. The Priest Personnel Board of the Archdiocese has already begun to meet to discuss ministry assignments for the coming year. St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mary will be included in these discussions as we look to changes in our pastoral assignments. What this does mean is that a new pastor will not be appointed until our regular rotation of assignments, which takes place the first week of July. This is due in part to the simple truth that we do not have priests in reserve. It does mean, however, that the needs of the parish communities in Bedford and Mitchell will be part of the larger dialogue surrounding personnel and clergy throughout the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

I won't deny the challenges associated with waiting. It does mean that for the next three months the communities of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mary will be in a position of sustaining the essential ministries and programs already in place. We are in a unique time in our Church's experience. The current coronavirus epidemic has meant the suspension of public gatherings of the faithful and regular sacramental celebrations. What this means for us in the coming weeks remains uncertain. However, as this situation continues to unfold, and in the interim between now and this summer, my office will work to ensure that the essential sacramental needs of the parish will be provided for according to the directives of the Archdiocese. In the meantime, I want to express my confidence in the leadership of the parish staff. I will be consulting with them in the days ahead.

If there are questions that remain or arise, please feel free to contact me at ejohnson@archindy.org. Know of my prayers for you and your community. Please pray for us, the Archbishop and the Personnel Board as we discern new leadership for St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mary. May God bless and keep you, and may He show you his grace and his love.

Peace,

Very Reverend Eric M. Johnson, VE
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy, Religious and Parish Life Coordinators
Vice Chancellor