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March 17, 2010:

Dear St. Clare Parish:

I am writing this letter out of love and respect for you. I have tried to be honest and “transparent” with you hoping my humanity and struggles to be a disciple of Jesus could somehow be an example for you. I have something very personal to share and ask your patience should I do it poorly or insensitively. Through a recent gut-wrenching discernment process with my spiritual director, therapist and some priests, I have come to the decision to leave St. Clare Parish and the priesthood. I came to this decision not because I don't love being a priest or serving you as your pastor, but because I can no longer live the celibate life.

I have loved being a priest and pastor for you. The countless ways you have invited me into your lives and hearts, those deep personal places where you meet the living God, have been so touching and powerful for me personally. Presiding at sacraments, celebrating milestones, grieving losses and good-byes, sharing the sufferings and sorrows of the followers of Christ has been an incredible honor. I leave because of a private longing in my heart and soul that I have ignored or suppressed to my detriment, not from any negligence from you.

I decided this past summer to pick up, look at, and carry the growing tension of my loneliness. I have come to the point in my life where the difficult times related to being alone have become a continuous part of my life. I have been able to mask my emotional difficulty very effectively by throwing myself into all kinds of stuff, and God knows the priesthood and pastoring is a big enough ministry to consume all my time and energy. I love priestly ministry but I cannot live this life of celibacy. My ministry is life giving but the celibate lifestyle is crippling me. So I can say honestly that I have loved being a priest and working as a priest for you. But the celibate lifestyle has become more and more difficult for me and more and more damaging to my ability to be a whole person.

Therefore, March 21st is my last day as your pastor. Archbishop Vlazny in July will assign your next pastor, the regular time for the assignment of pastors. In the mean time, the Vicar for Clergy Fr. Pat Brennan and Fr. Jim Galluzzo will work closely with the parish staff and leadership to provide regular pastoral services and

sacramental life until July. Also, be assured that everything you've shared in confidence with me will remain just that, confidential. I have asked parish leadership to schedule a time this spring when we can meet informally to share a more personal "thanks" and "good-bye".

The parish will continue as planned: weddings, First Eucharist, Confirmation, weekend Masses, all the committees, council and meetings will go on because we have a pastor in Archbishop Vlazny. As St. Paul wrote: "After all, who is Apollos? And who is Paul? Simply ministers through whom you became believers, each of them doing only what the Lord assigned him. I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but GOD made it grow. This means that neither he who plants nor he who waters is of any special account, only God, who gives the growth." (1 Cor. 3: 5ff) You will honor me and my ministry with you most by warmly welcoming whoever the Archbishop sends in July as your next pastor. I know you will welcome Fr. Jim Galluzzo during this interim as you have in the past.

I am very sorry for any sense of betrayal my leaving may cause you. When I was Ordained, I committed to, among other things, to live a celibate life. I am very sorry I am no longer able to fulfill that commitment and ask you to forgive me.

Yes, I think we have been a good match, a good partnership, a fruitful couple, you and me. I am so honored to have been connected with you, supported by you and struggled with living the Gospel of Jesus with you. The weekly Eucharist is an outward sign of our inner reality: again, together, we offered our lives with Christ to the Father, and said "take and eat". I invite you to join me again in "offering ourselves", in whatever capacity, to glorify the one who formed us from the dust of the earth.

I have full confidence that God will bring to completion the good work He has begun in each of us. I do love you, will pray for your fruitful transition and ask you to pray for me as I strive to travel this transition in the light of God's love and grace.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Farley